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THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel · Bart Sears · Andy Smith · Michael Atiyeh

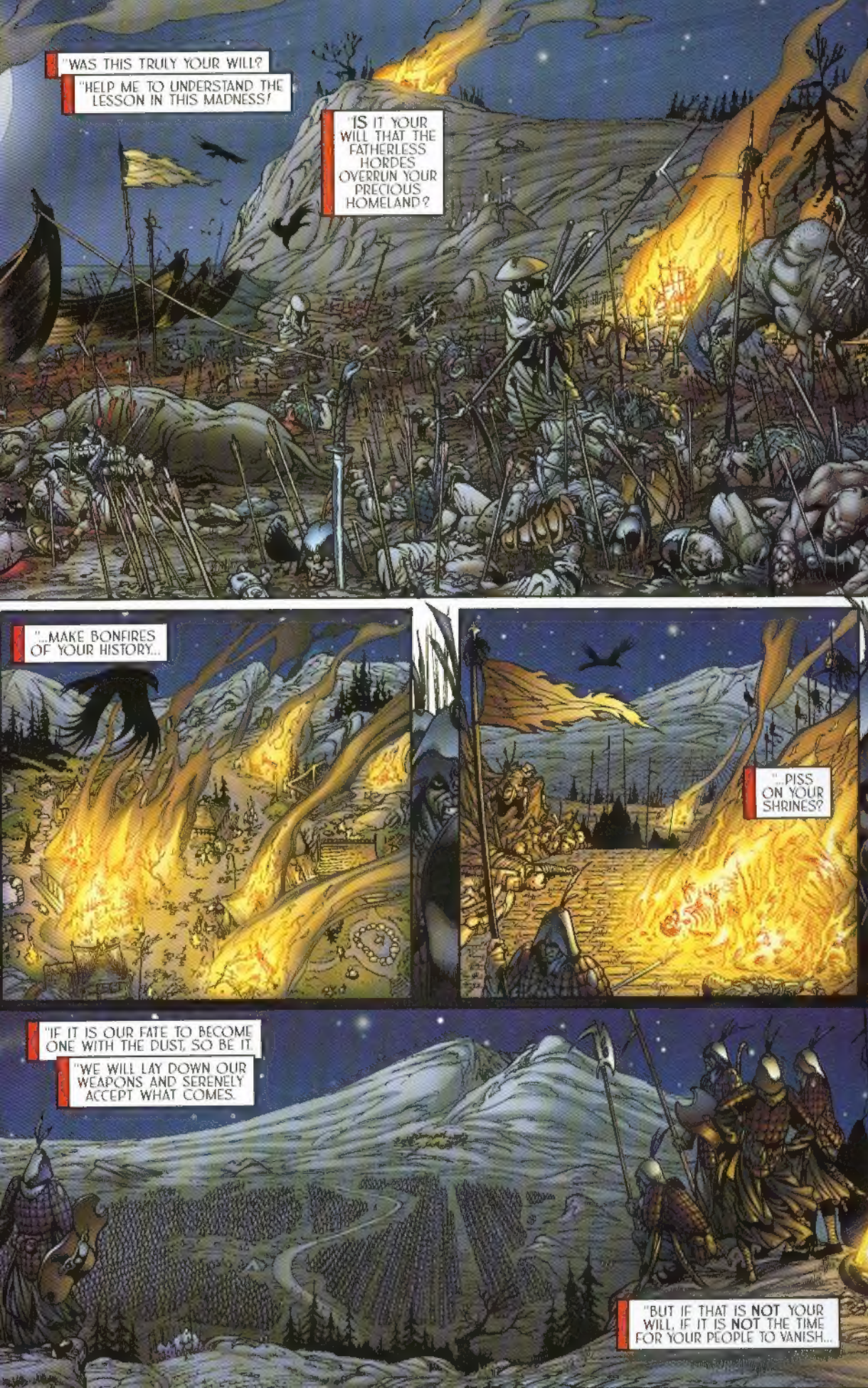
GRACOS...
...COME, GRACOS...
...TURN TO YOUR FRIENDS...
...LOOK AT THEM...
...LET ME SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES...
YOU WON'T EVEN KNOW I'M HERE...
NO ONE EVER DOES.

ARE YOU PREPARING FOR WAR?
NO, NOT WAR...

"IN THE TELLING, SOME TALES BEGIN WITH A PROBLEM AND LEAD TO A WAR...
"...THIS ONE BEGINS WITH A WAR...
"...AND LEADS TO A BIG PROBLEM.
"THE TALE STARTS AS SO...
"ON THE EVE OF HIS ARMY'S LAST STAND, THE WARLORD TODOSI FELL TO HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT—"
GODS OF THE WORLD AND SPIRIT, THIS UNWORTHY ONE HUMBLY BEGS YOUR NOTICE!

BUT A HUNT!
...AND I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU SEEK...
...I'LL BE WATCHING...
THE COMING DAWN BRINGS THE FINAL BATTLE.
WE WHO WERE ONCE SO PLENTIFUL ARE NOW FEW, THE LAST DEFENDERS OF YOUR SACRED VALLEY.
WE GUARD HER ENTRANCE WITH LITTLE MORE THAN OUR BODIES.
I HAVE STRIVEN TO BE A GOOD AND FAITHFUL WARLORD.
IT WAS YOUR WILL, SPOKEN THROUGH THE EMPEROR, THAT HAS LED TO THIS.
WE INVADED SHINACEA'S SHORES AGAINST ALL OMENS...
...NOW OUR OWN LAND, NAYADO...

"...PAYS THE BLOOD PRICE.
"SHALL THEY TRAMPLE OUR HONOR AS THEIR UNWASHED FEET GRIND THE LAND INTO BARE CLAY?
"IS IT BY YOUR DOING THAT THEY SLAUGHTER THE PEOPLE OF YOUR BLOOD...


"WAS THIS TRULY YOUR WILL?
"HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND THE LESSON IN THIS MADNESS!
"IS IT YOUR WILL THAT THE FATHERLESS HORDES OVERRUN YOUR PRECIOUS HOMELAND?
"...MAKE BONFIRES OF YOUR HISTORY...
"...PISS ON YOUR SHRINES?
"IF IT IS OUR FATE TO BECOME ONE WITH THE DUST, SO BE IT.
"WE WILL LAY DOWN OUR WEAPONS AND SERENELY ACCEPT WHAT COMES.
"BUT IF THAT IS NOT YOUR WILL, IF IT IS NOT THE TIME FOR YOUR PEOPLE TO VANISH...

GIVE ME A SIGN, I BEG YOU!

YOU SEND HEAVY WORDS TO THE GODS, TODOSI...

...LET US PRAY THEY WILL BE HEARD.

PERHAPS THEY ARE, LITTLE BROTHER...

...BUT NOT AS YOU SUPPOSE.
ENTER!

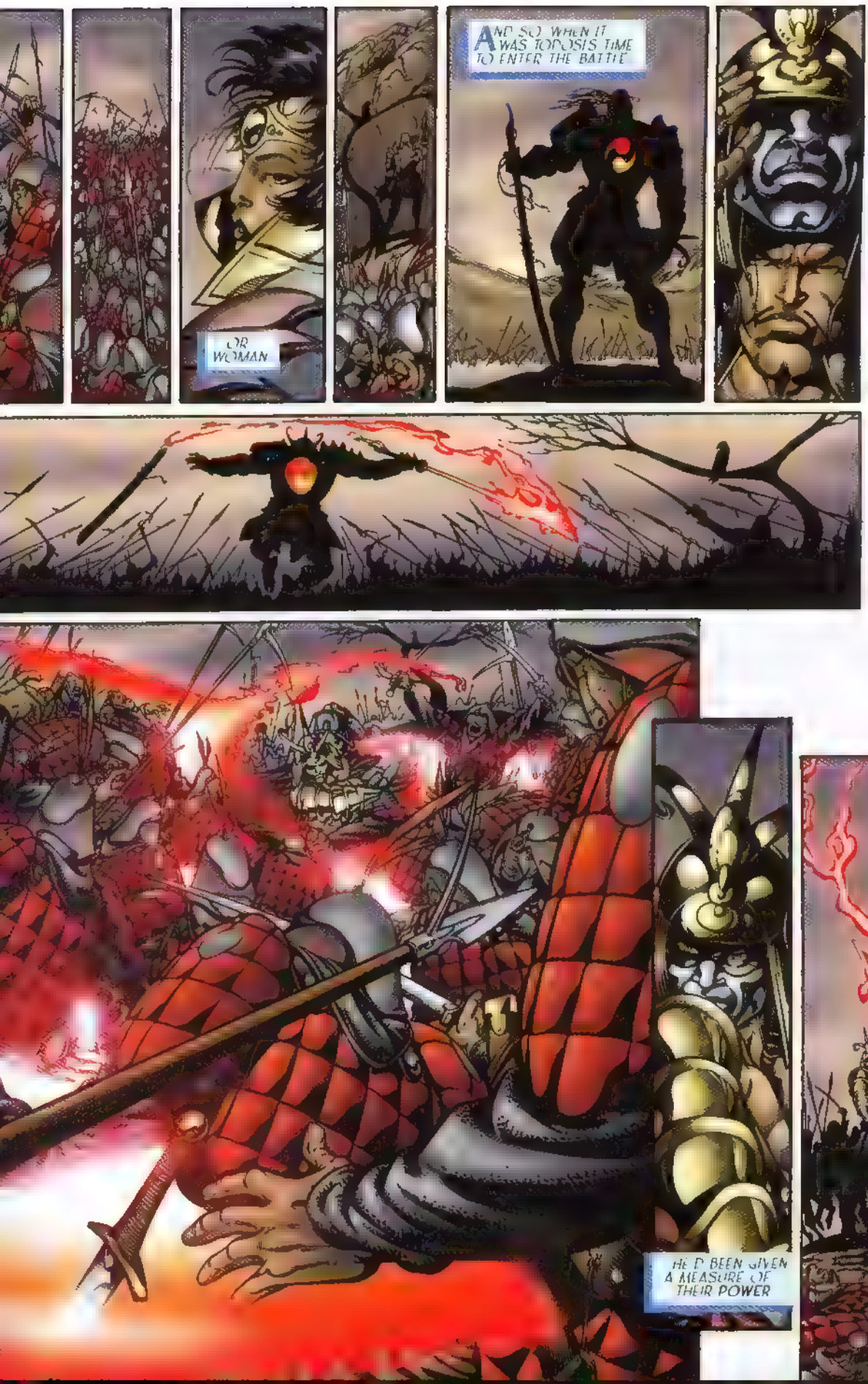
TODOSI!

WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENED?
THE GODS HAVE GIVEN ME A MESSAGE.
SO I SEE.
THOSE SAME GODS HAVE MADE THEIR MESSAGE SIMPLE TO INTERPRET.
THIS IS THE SYMBOL FOR TWO FORCES IN ETERNAL OPPOSITION...
...A SIGN OF WAR.

WAR.
"DAWN APPROACHED, AND THE WARRIORS OF NAYADO MET THE RISING LIGHT WITH RISING FIRE.
"THEY WERE NO LONGER A BATTERED FORCE NEARING DEFEAT...
"...BUT A MIGHTY ARMY LED BY A WARLORD...
"...PERSONALLY MARKED BY THE GODS!"
ARCHERS AT READY!
BROTHER, YOU MUST BEAR A MESSAGE FOR ME.
AND THIS MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED NOW?
YES! GO TO OUR MOTHER...
...AND TELL HER WHAT YOU HAVE WITNESSED THIS NIGHT!
"...THE WARLORD SAID, KNOWING THIS DUTY WOULD TAKE HIS BROTHER MOST OF A DAY TO ACCOMPLISH...
"...WHILE THE BATTLE WOULD LAST LESS THAN A DAY.
HOLD POSITION...

NOW.
"AS THE DAY CAME TO LIFE, SO TOO DID THE WAR.
"WATCHED OVER BY THE WARLORD...
"...HIS DUTY TO OBSERVE AND DIRECT...
"...TO SET AN EXAMPLE BY HIS STRENGTH AND FEARLESSNESS...
GO.
"...FOR THE MEN DEFENDING THE HONOR OF NAYADO.

THOUGH OUTNUMBERED NAYADO'S FORCES FOUGHT LIKE WARRIORS OF FULL REST AND FRESH HOPE
TO THE LAST MAN
IT BECAME A DAY THE SURVIVORS WOULD REMEMBER IN REVERENCE AND AWE
BECAUSE THE WARLORD TODOSI HAD BEEN GIVEN NOT JUST A SYMBOL OF THE GODS' FAVOR


AND SO WHEN IT WAS TODOSIS TIME TO ENTER THE BATTLE
OR WOMAN
HE'D BEEN GIVEN A MEASURE OF THEIR POWER

TODOSI'S LINE WAS BELIEVED TO BE DESCENDED FROM THE GODS, A NOTION DISPUTED BY THE EMPEROR
WHO SHARED NO ANCESTORS WITH TODOSI AND WHO MANY BELIEVED TO BE MAD
SEEING THEIR WARLORD CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF HIS FORCES HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS
INCLUDING THE FOREIGNER AND THE WOMAN RUMORED TO LOVE THE WAR LORD
THOSE FEW WHO KNEW TODOSI TO BE BUT A MAN

WERE SURPRISED TO SEE HIM REBORN AS A GOD
THE LIVING WILL OF NAYADO
THAT WILL WOULD NOT FALTER
AGAINST AN ENEMY INTENT ON THE ERADICATION OF NOT ONLY THEIR LIVES BUT THEIR ENTIRE CULTURE AND HISTORY

BUT EVEN THE GODLIKE TODOSI COULD BE OVERWHELMED
BY THE FORCES OF A LAND WHOSE NUMBERS WERE MORE THAN TEN TIMES TEN OF NAYADOS
AWARENESS OF THE FUTILITY OF HIS ACTIONS FELLED THE MIGHTY WARLORD

WAS THE MIRACLE OF TODOSI'S POWER TO BE FOLLOWED BY DEFEAT?
WHY, O SPIRITS OF LAND AND SEE?
WHY GRANT ME YOUR SIGN AND YOUR POWER ONLY TO ALLOW NAYADO TO BE SACRIFICED?
DEATH IS A WARRIOR'S DUTY... MY LIFE IS OF NO IMPORTANCE BUT NAYADO ITSELF MUST BE ETERNAL!
WHAT OFFENSE HAVE MY PEOPLE MADE THAT WE DESERVE TO BE FORGOTTEN?

AND ONCE AGAIN
TODOSIS CRY TO THE GODS WAS ANSWERED

BUT THEY HAD COME NOT FOR NAYADO
BUT FOR TODOSI
THE SHINAGEAN ARMY HAD NOTICED THE GODS PARTICULAR INTEREST IN NAYADO'S WARLORD
AND FEARING AN ALLIANCE OF GODS AND ENEMIES WOULD PUT THEM AT THE DISADVANTAGE
WISELY DECIDED TO AVOID OFFENDING THE GODS WITH THEIR PRESENCE

A SIMPLE GESTURE INDICATED THAT THE GODS WISHED TOPOSI TO ACCOMPANY THEM
YET TOPOSI'S ARCHERS PERCEIVED A THREAT TO THEIR WARLORD'S LIFE
AND RESPONDED AS DUTY COMMANDED
BUT THEY FACED GODS WITH STRANGE POWERS
THAT'S A TWAA'S WEAPON
SO ALL THEY ACCOMPLISHED WAS TO ANGER THE GODS
WHO SHOWED NO MERCY
BAH, BAH LITTLE PEOPLE
PERSHA I CAN'T QUITE TELL WHAT THEY INTEND TO DO

THE DAY LIVES ON IN TALE AND WHISPERS. THE DAY THE GODS CAME TO SMITE NAYADO
THEN LET THIS BE MY WORSHIP!
DARED SMITE A GOD
OOGCH!
SKLUTCH
THIS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH
WE MUST END THIS

EEYAAA!!?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
AND THE WARLORD TOPPLES!
IS THIS HOW YOU ANSWER MY PRAYERS?
WAIT!
NOT!
MADE
NOW?
GIVE THE SIGNAL

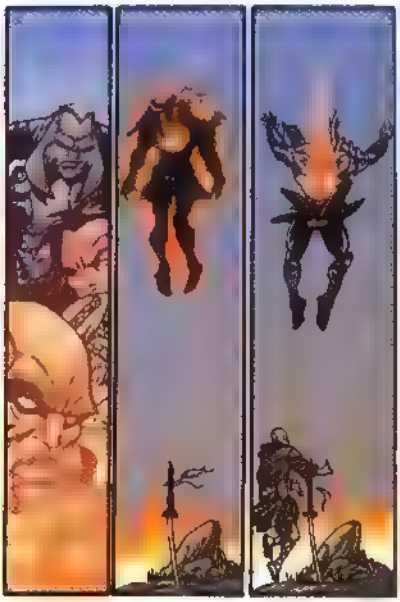
THE LAST OF THE WARRIORS OF NAYADO FOUGHT WITH HONOR BUT SOON FOUND THEMSELVES CAUGHT BETWEEN WRATHFUL GODS AND CONFLAGRATION
A PERFECT BALANCE OF DEATHS FIRE OF GODS GODS OF FIRE
THIS SYMMETRY WAS NOT LOST ON THE WARLORD TOPOSI WHO STORED THIS MOMENT OF PERFECTION IN HIS HEART EVEN AS HIS SOUL CRIED OUT
WHY HAVE YOU COME?
WHO ARE YOU?

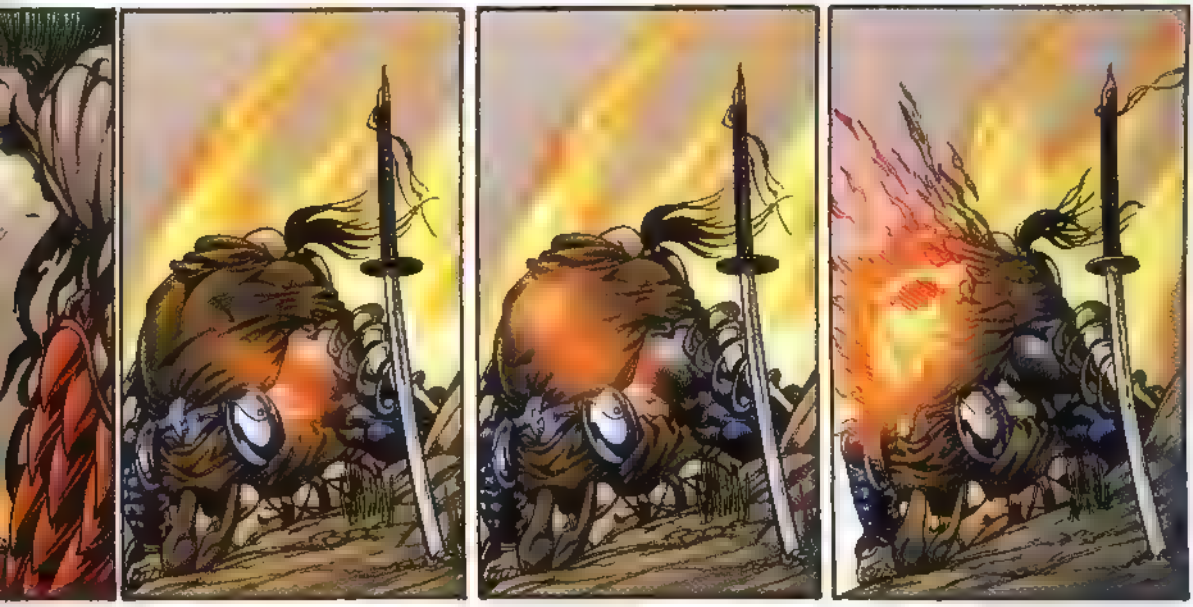
AM
YOUR DEATH
SEAHN?
WHAT
IT WAS KERSPAN WHO WAS PERSONALLY OFFENDED
ALLOW HIM
KERSPAN
AS YOU SAY
MONSTER!
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO
WHEN I SEVER YOUR HEAD?
BROTHER!

TODOSI WAS NOT ABLE TO WITNESS THE LAST ACT OF HIS STRANGE GIFT

BUT IT IS REMEMBERED THUSLY

ON THAT DAY





THE WAR ORD TODOS! KILLED A GOD
WHY?!

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THE FIRST™
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IN THE BEGINNING...

Todosi believed the First were the answer to his cry to the gods for help. Instead of assistance, the First offered Todosi his death at the hands of Kerspan, who wielded the legendary weapon of Altwaal, the first leader of the First. Killing the Sigil-Bearer caused Kerspan's own death. Now two – one mortal Sigil-Bearer and one of the First – lay dead on the battleground.

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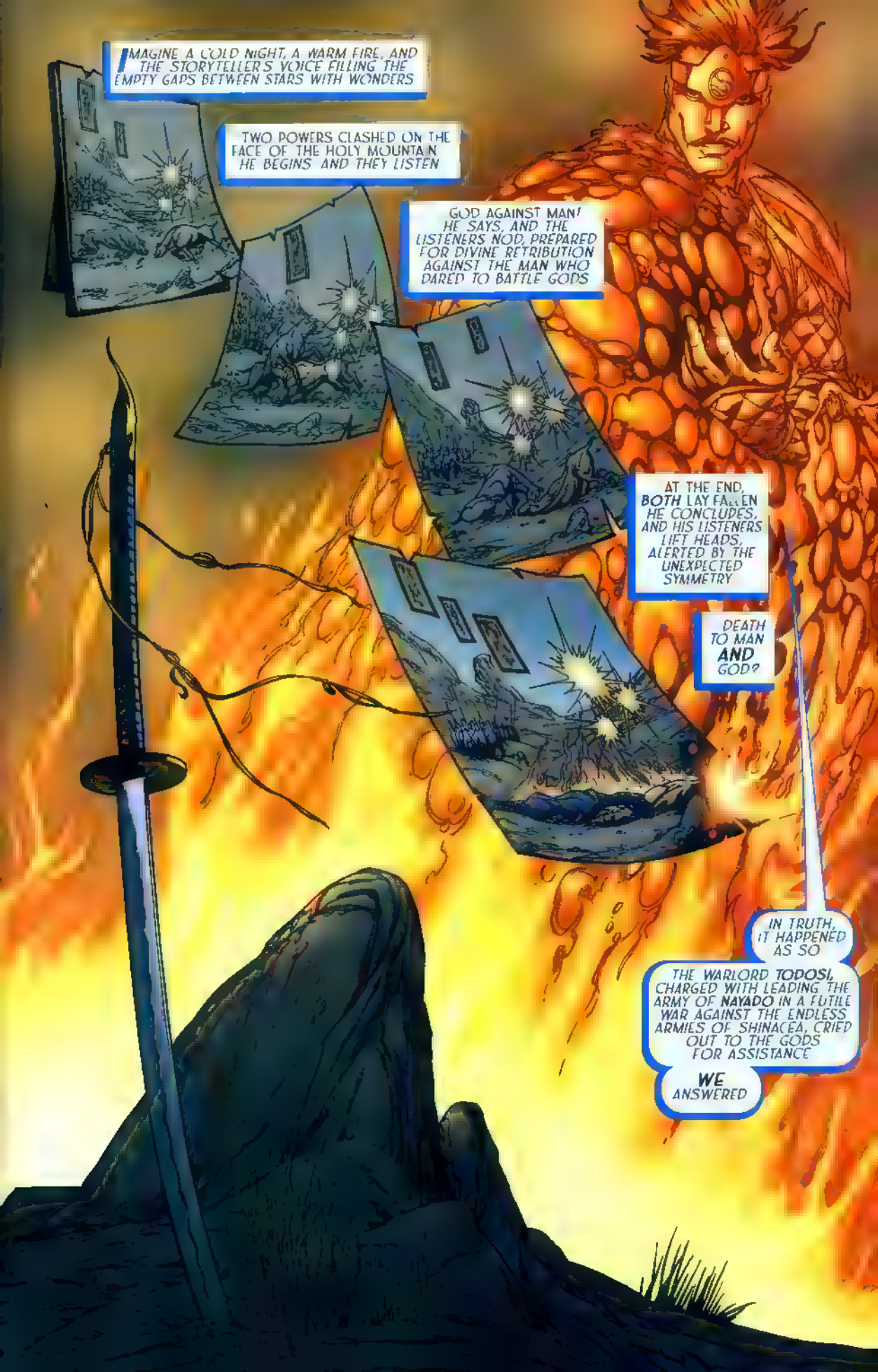
IMAGINE A COLD NIGHT, A WARM FIRE, AND THE STORYTELLER'S VOICE FILLING THE EMPTY GAPS BETWEEN STARS WITH WONDERS
TWO POWERS CLASHED ON THE FACE OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN HE BEGINS AND THEY LISTEN
GOD AGAINST MAN! HE SAYS, AND THE LISTENERS NOD, PREPARED FOR DIVINE RETRIBUTION AGAINST THE MAN WHO DARED TO BATTLE GODS
AT THE END, BOTH LAY FALLEN HE CONCLUDES, AND HIS LISTENERS LIFT HEADS, ALERTED BY THE UNEXPECTED SYMMETRY
DEATH TO MAN AND GOD?
IN TRUTH, IT HAPPENED AS SO
THE WARLORD TODOSI, CHARGED WITH LEADING THE ARMY OF NAYADO IN A FUTILE WAR AGAINST THE ENDLESS ARMIES OF SHINACEA, CRIED OUT TO THE GODS FOR ASSISTANCE
WE ANSWERED

TODOSIS FIRST GIFT FROM THE GODS WAS THE SIGIL AND ITS POWER TO WIELD DEATH

BUT WE, THE FIRST, **ARE** THE GODS AND THIS GIFT WAS **NOT** OF OUR DOING

SO OUR CURIOSITY AND CONCERN LED US TO TODOSI

BRINGING THE SECOND GIFT, TODOSIS TRANSFORMATION INTO LEGEND AT THE HANDS OF THE SECUNDAE **KERSPAN**

TODOSIS BROTHER, IN HIS GRIEF UNABLE TO APPRECIATE THE MYTHIC RESONANCE OF TODOSIS DEATH, CRIES OUT

BUTCHERS!

THE GODS ISSUE NO DENIAL
THERE IS TRUTH IN THE YOUNG MONK'S CRY

WYTHRE

THE SOUL BEARER HAS BEEN KILLED

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER

THE NEW ONE WILL HAVE TIME TO PREPARE

THE SHINACEAN ARMY IS IN RETREAT BUT THEY WILL RETURN ONCE WE LEAVE

THERE MUST BE A NEW MENTOR LEFT BEHIND

MY [illegible]

THE GODS ARE STUNNED, NOT ONLY BY KERSPAN'S UNEXPECTED DEATH

BUT BY THE ACCIDENTAL CRUELTY FOR WHICH THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE

SO THE NEW SIGIL-BEARER'S INSULT IS TOLERATED

TODOSI

MY BROTHER CALLED DOWN THE GODS

HE BEGGED YOU FOR A DY

WHY DID HE HAVE TO PAY THIS PRICE?

WHY?

THE WEAPON

THIS IS THE WEAPON THAT CAUSED MY BROTHER'S DEATH

..CAN IT DO THE SAME TO YOU?

THESE ARE NOT THE SELFISH GODS

BUT THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS PATIENT

YOU PROVED YOURSELF FALSE GODS WHEN ONE OF YOUR KIND KILLED MY BROTHER FOR HIS CRIME OF PIETY!

PATIENCE IS FORCED UPON THEM BY THE SIGIL-BEARER'S POSSESSION OF A WEAPON LONG THOUGHT LOST

BUT RECENTLY PROVED LETHAL, EVEN TO GODS

SEAHN

DON'T

IT WOULD UPSET THE BALANCE

SEAHN!

HERE'S A HINT FOR YOU

MORE HINTS NOW?

DO NOTHING MORE HERE

SINCE WE'RE HOME I EXPECT YOU TO EXPLAIN EARLY TO PYREM HOW YOU GAINED

AND LOST

ALL WARS WEAPON

THE YOUNG MONK STARED IN SHOCK AT THE SPECTACLE OF GODS SQUABBLING LIKE CHILDREN

THE ABSURDITY CREATED WITHIN THE TENSION A MOMENT OF PAUSE

...DURING WHICH THE WORLD SEEMED TO SHIFT SLIGHTLY

BE ALTERED SOMEHOW

BUT ALL WAS IMMEDIATELY AS IT EVER WAS

AND SO

YOU ARE DEMONS, NOT GODS!

THE GODS FOUND THE MIGHT OF THEIR OWN WEAPON UNLEASHED AGAINST THEM

THE S.G.I.

IT TRAVELED

TO THIS ONE! HOW?

TRENIN THE HUNTER HAD CHOKED OUT THE TALE IN WHISPERS

HOW ANOTHER SIGIL-BEARER HAD REACHED WITHIN HIS FORM AND **STOLEN** HIS POWER!

A SUDDEN FAMILIARITY WARNED HIM **THIS** ONE WAS ABOUT TO DO THE SAME TO THEM **ALL!**

"AS LEADER OF THE HUNT, TRENIN BORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELFARE OF ALL MEMBERS.

WITH NO TIME TO SHOUT WARNING, THE HUNTER WRENCHED THEM ALL FROM THIS REALITY

ALL SAVE THE STORYTELLER, WHO REMAINED UNNOTICED AMONG THE ARMY OF NAYADO

EVEN AS THE WEAPON OF LEGEND STRUCK ITS DEADLY BLOW

'WITH ITS FORCE, CARRYING TO THE GODS THE YOUNG MONK'S FINAL THREAT

MONSTERS!

I WILL HUNT YOU DOWN AND DESTROY YOU ALL!

HE SAID! AND SO THE STORYTELLER ENDS HIS TALE. THE LISTENERS SIGH, THE SPELL BROKEN FOR THE NIGHT

BUT THEY KNOW THE NEXT NIGHT WILL BRING ANOTHER FIRE, ANOTHER STORY, ANOTHER STEP ALONG THE PATH

HOME
HROE DID I GET THEM ALL?
IS EVERYONE HERE?
EVERYONE BUT THE BARD HE SAID YOU!
YES HE'S STAYING BEHIND
CALL THE REST OF THE COUNCIL QUICKLY!
DYREM SAYS HE'LL BE

R GHT
W TH
YOU

YOU LOST ONE?
WHAT WENT WRONG?
THEY DID
YOU ORDERED ME TO INDULGE THESE UNDISCIPLINED WHELPS BY INCLUDING THEM.
THAT ONE COULDN'T KEEP HIS CREATURE UNDER CONTROL!
KERSPAN WAS PROVOKED!
HE HAD EVERY RIGHT!
IF YOU HAD BROUGHT BACK BETTER INFORMATION ABOUT THOSE
WHUMP
THAT'S FOR LETTING THE WEAPON YOU LOST BE USED AGAINST US
TRENIN
HE'S JUST MORE PROOF WE FIRST SHOULD NEVER HAVE BRED
THERE'S NOT A WINNER AMONG OUR OFFSPRING
THESE SECUNDAE
DID YOU KNOW THAT ONE HAD ALTWAAL'S WEAPON?
AND SEAHN WILL HAVE TO EXPLAIN HOW HE CAME TO HAVE IT BUT

BE PATIENT A LITTLE LONGER TRENN
I'M TIRED OF PATIENCE PYREM
FROM NOW ON I HUNT ALONE
TRENN ?
LET HIM GO, YALA
HE'S EARNED HIS DISGUST
SEAHN AGAIN?
PYREM YOU'D BETTER KEEP A CAREFUL EYE ON THAT BOY
BETTER YET, SEND HIM TO ME TO TRAIN
YOU'D LIKE THAT, WOULDN'T YOU?
Hmpf!
BY YOUR LEAVE PYREM I'M HEADING HOME
TO GRIEVE
FOLLOW ME IF YOU LIKE MY FRIENDS
BUT I'M DONE HERE
I KEEP HOPING THEY'LL MATURE
PYREM ?
YES?
THEY NEGLECTED AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE STORY
THE ONES MARKED WITH THE SIGN CAN KILL US
KILL ?

WHAT A FASCINATING TABLEAU

YOU PROVIDE SUCH WONDERFUL ENTERTAINMENT FOR ME, ORIUM

INTERESTING

THE SIGILED ONES CAN KILL OUR KIND

THIS MIGHT BE JUST WHAT WE NEED TO FORCE AND END TO THE ETERNAL STALEMATE BETWEEN THE HOUSES

AS THEIR HOUSE IS DIMINISHED BY DEATH, SO MIGHT OURS RISE

NOW MIGHT BE THE TIME TO ACT

YOUR THOUGHTS GANNISH?

GANNISH?

DISAPPEARING WITHOUT MY LEAVE

HOW *RUDE*

DISAPPEARING BECAUSE HE SAW A TRUTH THAT ESCAPED *YOUR* SEEING?

SHOW ME MORE OLD FOOL

SHOW ME WHERE MY ADVANTAGE LIES
MY FRIENDS ARE FOLLOWING
SEE TO THEIR WANTS
AND FORGET ANYTHING YOU HEAR HERE
HIGH COUNCIL
TIRED OLD MINDS!
PYREM NEEDS TO LEASH HIS HOUND --
TRENIN WAS OUT OF LINE
THE FIRST-BORN THINK THEY INVENTED POWER
THEY'VE GOT US LOCKED OUT OF THE COUNCIL AND INTO YOUNGER FORMS

THEIR LOSS
THE SLOW WAY THEY THINK! OBSERVE REPORT ASSESS.
PYREM WILL LET THESE MORTALS COME HERE AND KILL US BEFORE HE RECOGNIZES THEY'RE A THREAT!
IT'S TIME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!
A TOAST! TO KERSPAN HE PAID THE PRICE, BUT SET THINGS IN MOTION
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO, SEAHN? JUST SAY THE WORD.
PYREM'S BEEN COUNSELING PATIENCE WHAM! WE SHOULD -
GRACOS, THIS ISN'T A TIME FOR PATIENCE!
THIS IS A TIME FOR WAR!
EXTERMINATE THEM! THAT WOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEM!
IF I WERE IN CHARGE THINGS WOULD BE MORE DECISIVE
IF GRACOS WAS IN CHARGE I'D BE THAT PLAN BETTER
GO ON
WE'VE BEEN THE SAME FOR CENTURIES!
THANKS TO THE SIGIL BEARERS THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY HERE FOR NEW BLOOD TO RULE
SECUNDAE BLOOD!

OOOOH!
DISSENT IN THE RANKS!
PERHAPS WE CAN MAKE AN ALLIANCE WITH THAT ONE?
ALLIANCES ARE DANGEROUS
I HAVE MORE ALLIANCES THAN YOU KNOW, OLD MAN
MY AGENTS ARE EVERYWHERE
BUT YOUR EYES ARE HERE, INGRA CAN YOU WATCH ALL ALLIES AT ONCE THROUGH THEM?

WHAT I SEE IS A TIRESOME OLD SHELL OFFERING UNNECESSARY ADVICE
O MOTHER
WYTURE!
IT'S ALL MAKING SENSE!

DO YOU SEE?
ON THAT WORLD WHEN THE SIGIL BEARER DIED
FOR JUST A MOMENT THE ENERGIES OF THE TWO SIDES CAME TOGETHER
BECAME ONE
THE SIGIL HE WORE CONTAINED THE GLYPHS OF BOTH HOUSES.
UNITED
IT'S A SIGN
THE TWO HOUSES MUST BECOME ONE AGAIN
AND WE MUST MAKE IT HAPPEN

Barbara
KESEL
WRITER
Bart
SEARS
PENCILER
Andy
SMITH
INKER
Michael
ATIYEH
COLORIST
Dave
LANPHEAR
LETTERER
created by
Mark Alessi
Cina M. Villa
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Cina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
Michael A. Beattie
Chief Financial Officer
Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
James Breitbell
Director of
Marketing & Distribution
Ian M. Feller
Manager Media Relations
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Brandon Peterson
Art Director
Pam Davies
Production
Manager
Sylvia Bretz
Production
Assistant
Dave Lanphear
Design Director
Tiffany Mercado
Freelance Coordinator

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THE FIRST™
Barbara Kesel
Bart Sears
Andy Smith
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IN THE BEGINNING...
They were the first.
From their home, Elysia, they held
own personal stores.
left behind on that world.
INGRA
the SEETHING BEAUTY
PYREM
the DIPLOMAT
ORIUM
the ORACLE
TRENIN
the HUNTER
GANNISH
the SUFFERER
YALA
the WARRIOR WOMAN
PERSHA
SEAHN
He wants things to change...
The hunting party survivors travel home to Elysia, where Seahn is shamed for the weapon's loss, fueling his desire to change the way his House is run. His dissent is noted by Ingra, leader of the opposite House, who watches through Orium's scrying sphere. Persha watches through her mother Ingra's eyes, and sees what others failed to note: The Sigil-Bearers wear the sign of both Houses. They must again become ONE!

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I'M GOING TO SEE RAAMIA, ENSON
I WANT SOME ANSWERS
AND I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANOTHER WORD OF ADVICE AGAINST IT!
AFTER THE ROASTING I TOOK FROM THE COUNCIL THIS MORNING
ABOUT ALTWAALS WEAPON, I PRESUME?
THEY PRACTICALLY ARRESTED ME JUST BECAUSE I FOUND IT LYING AROUND ON AN UNUSED WORLD!
SORRY ABOUT THAT
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, ENSON, AS IT WAS HARDLY MY FAULT THAT KERSPAN DIED!
HE WAS MY FRIEND! THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE HONORING HIM--
NOT WASTING THEIR TIME AND MINE WITH SNIDE ACCUSATIONS OF TREASON!

RAAMIA...

ARE YOU ENTERTAINING VISITORS TODAY?

b

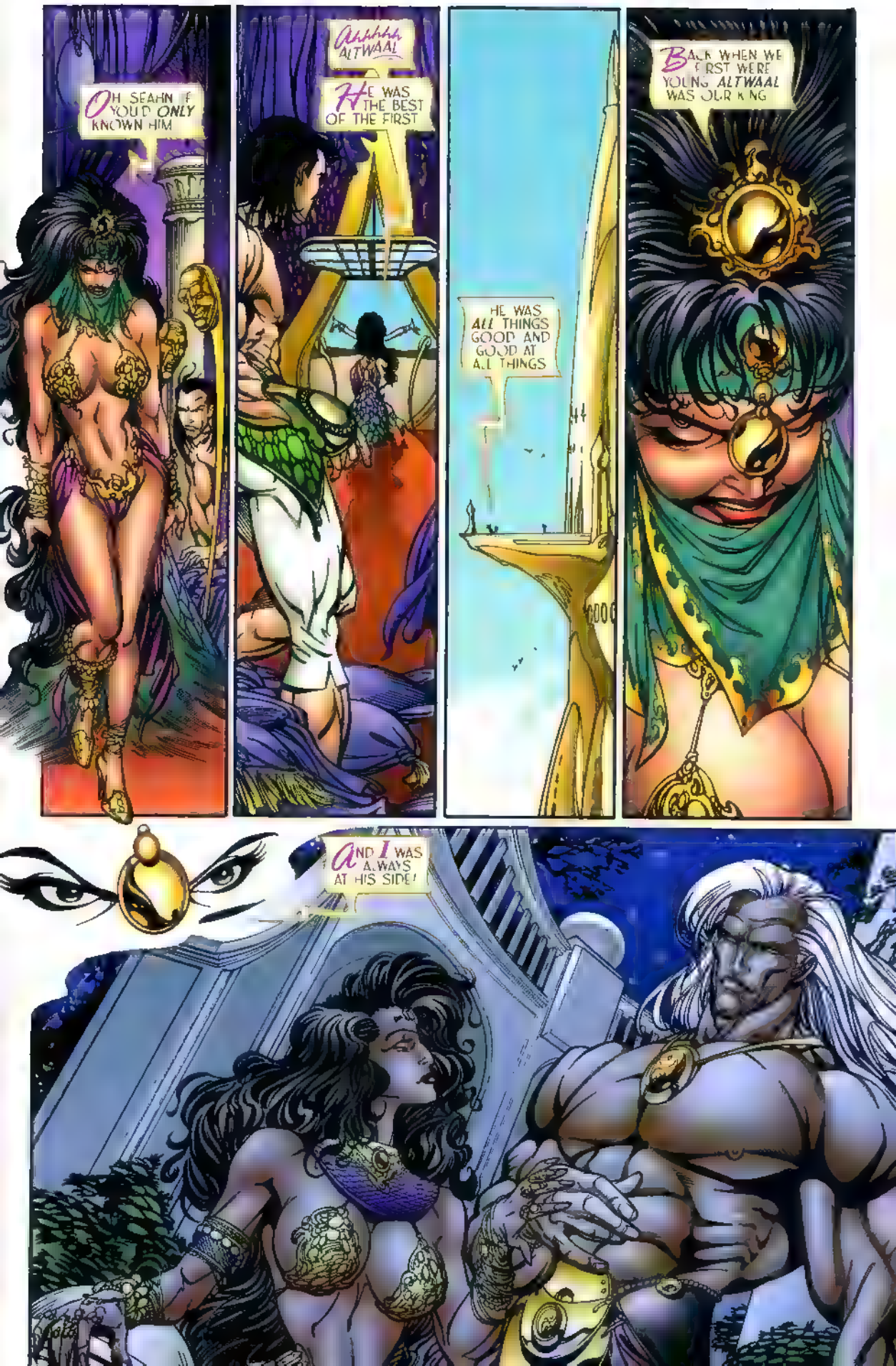
YOU'RE NOT RAAMIA

AS IF THERE COULD BE ANY DOUBT

WELCOME TO MY WORLD SEAHN

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE ENTICED YOU HERE?

YOUR SORDID PAST OF COURSE
ALTWAAL
I HEARD YOU TWO WERE ONCE CLOSE
NOW, SEAHN
THAT'S A personal QUESTION
WHICH DESIRES A MUCH MORE INTIMATE LOCALE FOR ITS ANSWER
ALTWAAL
AH POOR LOST ALTWAAL
WAS THE LOVE OF MY LIFE!
I THOUGHT I WAS THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE
YOU'RE JUST THE LOVE OF MY AFTERNOON


OH SEAHN IF YOU'D ONLY KNOWN HIM
AHHHH, ALTWAAL
HE WAS THE BEST OF THE FIRST
HE WAS ALL THINGS GOOD AND GOOD AT ALL THINGS
BACK WHEN WE FIRST WERE YOUNG ALTWAAL WAS OUR KING
AND I WAS ALWAYS AT HIS SIDE!

AS WERE *MANY* OTHERS, A'TWAAL *ALWAYS* USED TO SAY THAT THE *ONLY* THING HE LACKED IN LIFE WAS *SOLITUDE*

BACK THEN, THE FIRST WERE *ONE*. WE HAD NOT YET RETREATED INTO OUR SEPARATE HOUSES TO *BEMOAN* OUR DIFFERENCES.

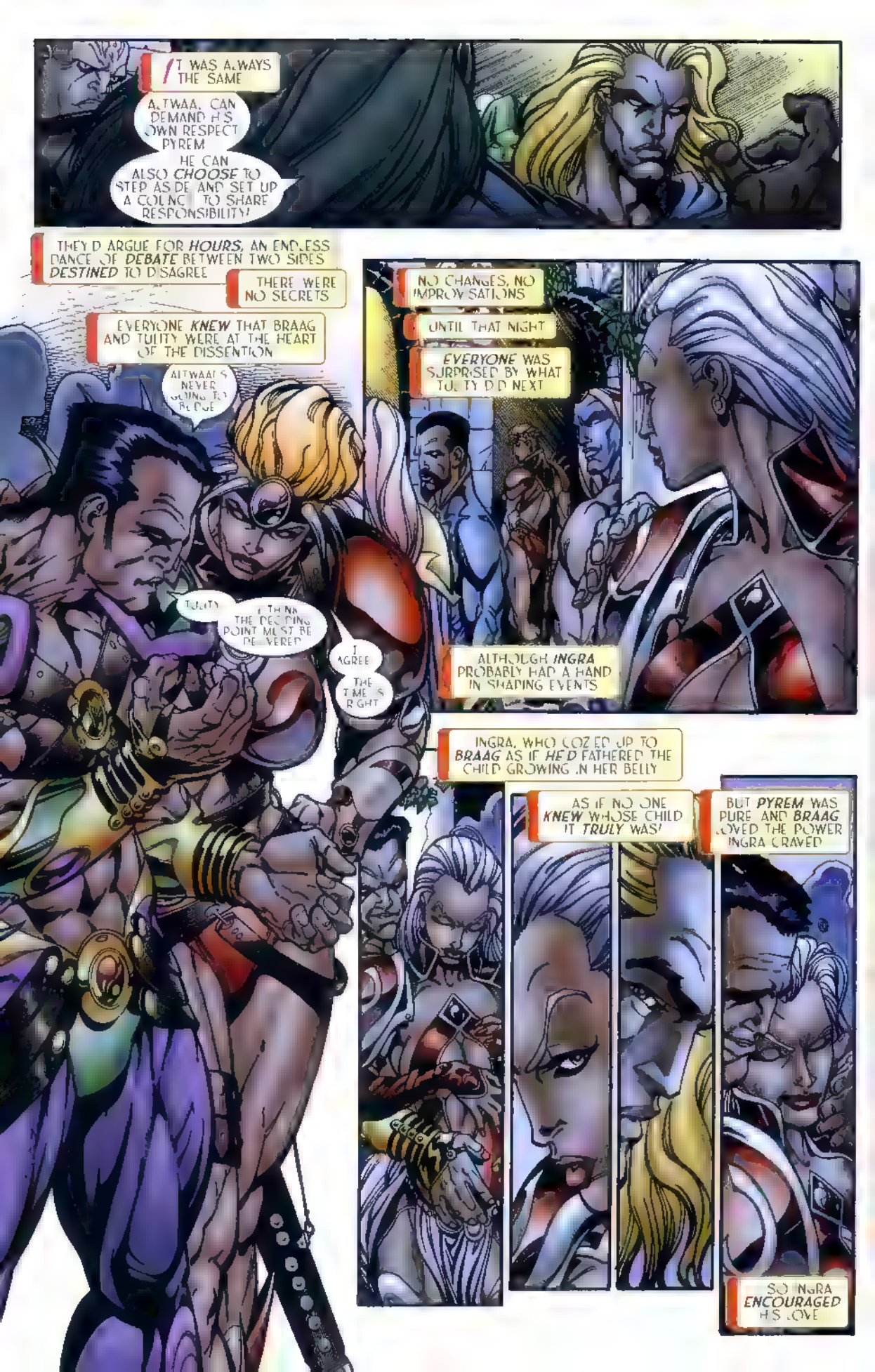
INSTEAD, WE AIRED THEM NIGHTLY.

THAT'S NOT THE *POINT!*

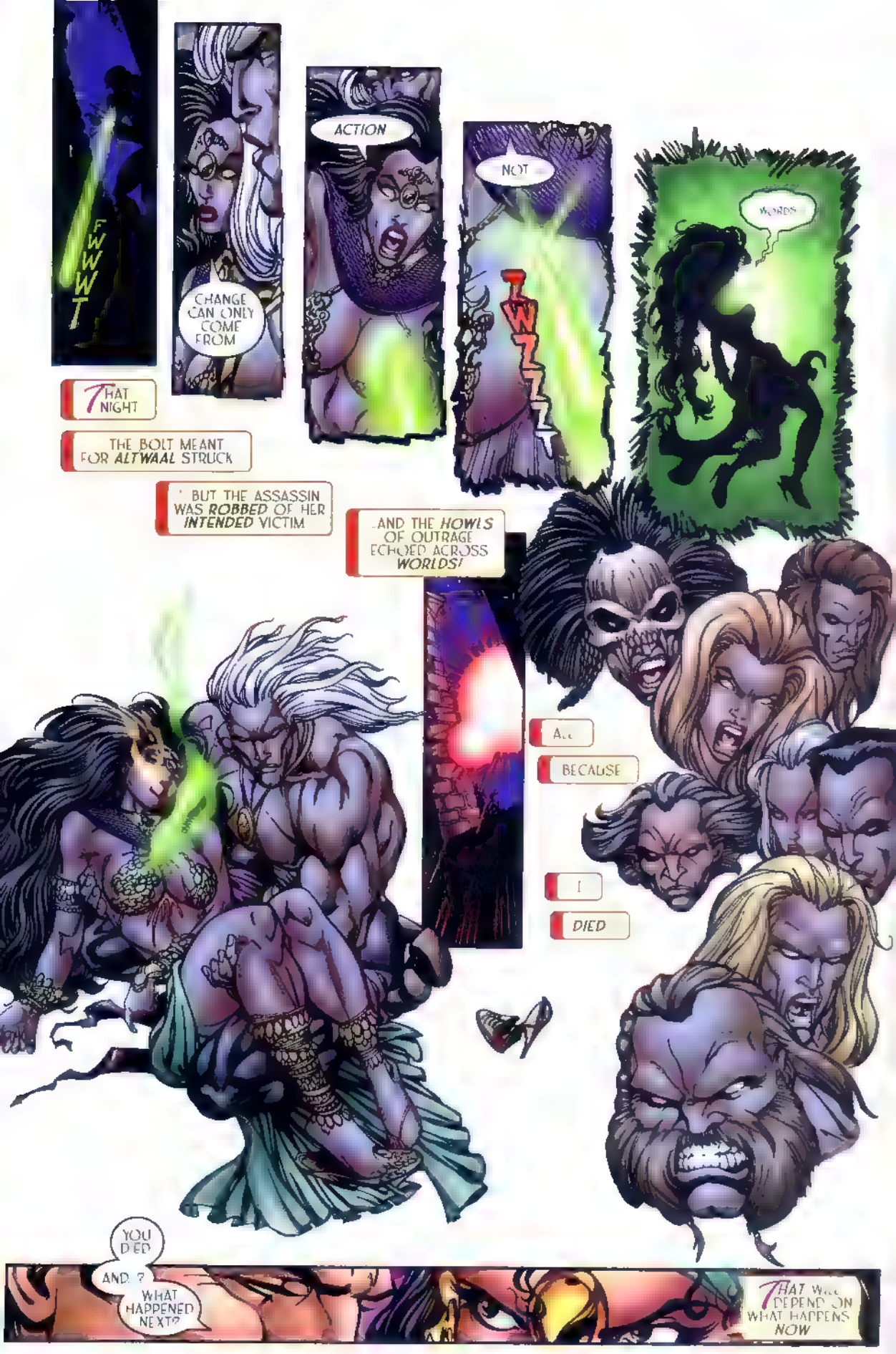
YOU NO LONGER REPRESENT THE SOLE VOICE OF THE FIRST, A'TWAAL!

YOUR TREASURED WISDOM SHOULD HAVE MADE THAT CLEAR TO YOU *LONG* AGO.

ADDRESS ALTWAAL WITH *RESPECT*, GH'RRETUR!

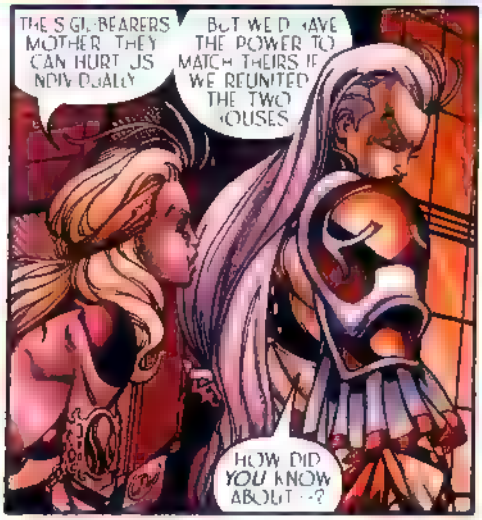

IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME
ALTWAA, CAN DEMAND HIS OWN RESPECT PYREM
HE CAN ALSO *CHOOSE* TO STEP ASIDE AND SET UP A COUNCIL TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY!
THEY'D ARGUE FOR *HOURS*, AN ENDLESS DANCE OF *DEBATE* BETWEEN TWO SIDES *DESTINED* TO DISAGREE
THERE WERE NO SECRETS
EVERYONE *KNEW* THAT BRAAG AND TUITTY WERE AT THE HEART OF THE DISSENTION
ALTWAA IS NEVER GOING TO BUDGE
TUITTY
I THINK THE DECIDING POINT MUST BE DELIVERED
I AGREE
THE TIME IS RIGHT
NO CHANGES, NO IMPROVISATIONS
UNTIL THAT NIGHT
EVERYONE WAS SURPRISED BY WHAT TUITTY DID NEXT
ALTHOUGH *INGRA* PROBABLY HAD A HAND IN SHAPING EVENTS
INGRA, WHO COZIED UP TO *BRAAG* AS IF *HE'D* FATHERED THE CHILD GROWING IN HER BELLY
AS IF NO ONE *KNEW* WHOSE CHILD IT *TRULY* WAS!
BUT *PYREM* WAS PURE AND *BRAAG* LOVED THE POWER INGRA CRAVED
SO INGRA *ENCOURAGED* HIS LOVE

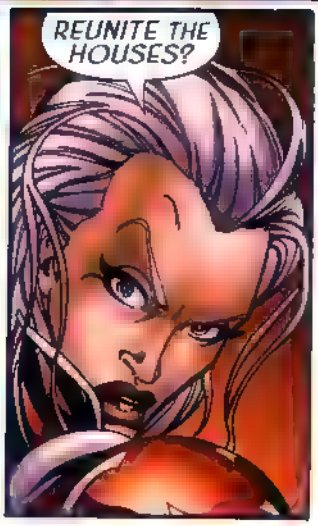
EVERY NIGHT THE SAME PLAYERS TOOK THEIR CUSTOMARY POSITIONS AND THE DANCE BEGAN AGAIN
ALTWAAL, IF YOU CONTINUE TO ALLOW THIS POINTLESS GRIPING TO CONTINUE UNCHECKED
WE MIGHT AS WELL ARMOR UP AND GO BACK TO WAR LIKE THE OLD DAYS!
YES, PYREM!
LIKE THE OLD DAYS!
NOT LIKE NOW
WE DID CHANGE ALTWAAL!
AND WE CAN CHANGE AGAIN!
AND EACH NIGHT, WISE ALTWAAL CONSIDERED ALL COUNSEL
BUT THAT NIGHT WAS DIFFERENT
A NEW STAR ROSE ON THE HORIZON
I WAS YOUNG AND KNEW MY PLACE BUT I COULD KEEP MY PEACE NO MORE!
CHATTER, CHATTER, CHATTER!
IT'S LIKE WATCHING MONKEYS COPULATE
DIFFICULT NOT TO LAUGH!
DON'T YOU EVER TIRE OF THIS GAME?
WHO--?
IT WAS ALL SO TERRIBLY FASCINATING
ONCE
NOTHING WILL EVER HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE IF YOU ALL WASTE THOSE LIPS FORMING THE SAME ARGUMENTS EVERY EVENING!


FWWT
CHANGE CAN ONLY COME FROM
ACTION
NOT
WORDS
ZWZZZ
THAT NIGHT
THE BOLT MEANT FOR ALTWAAL STRUCK
BUT THE ASSASSIN WAS ROBBED OF HER INTENDED VICTIM
AND THE HOWLS OF OUTRAGE ECHOED ACROSS WORLDS!
A...
BECAUSE
I
DIED
YOU DIED
AND ?
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
THAT WILL DEPEND ON WHAT HAPPENS NOW

WYTURE?
YOU BELIEVE ME DON'T YOU?
THAT IT'S TIME FOR THE HOUSES TO JOIN TOGETHER?
I'D STOP YOU IF I DIDN'T PERSHA
WE BOTH SAW THE SIGIL BEARER KILL ONE OF OUR KIND
THEN YOU GATHER OUR ALLIES
SEE WHAT I CAN DO TO CONVINCE NORA OF MY VISION
MOTHER?

PERSHA?
YOU LOOK PALE CHILD
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
IT'S WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN


THE SOUL-BEARERS MOTHER THEY CAN HURT US NOW EQUALLY
BUT WE'D HAVE THE POWER TO MATCH THEIRS IF WE REUNITED THE TWO HOUSES
HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT--?


REUNITE THE HOUSES?

PERSHA!

YOU MUST NEVER SPEAK OF THIS AGAIN!
MAMA!
FORGIVE ME, PERSHA BUT A CONSTRAINT WAS NECESSARY
YOU MAY NOT SPEAK OF UNTING THE HOUSES AGAIN!
I APOLOGIZE FOR BEING SO INSISTENT, BUT IT'S NOT JUST IMPORTANT TO ME THAT YOU NOT SPEAK OF THIS.
IT'S SAFER FOR YOU.
NOTHING BAD MUST HAPPEN TO YOU MY TREASURE

PERSHA - !
WHY?
WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?
I KNOW I'M RIGHT! WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN? WHY PREVENT ME FROM EVEN MENTIONING IT?
WHO WERE YOU, ALTWAA? OBVIOUSLY, MORE THAN AN IMAGE ON AN ANCIENT OBELISK
YOU'RE LONG GONE, YET *YOUR* WEAPON REEMERGED AND KILLED A FIRST
I KNOW IT'S ALL CONNECTED, BUT NOW I CAN'T ASK ANYONE
EXCEPT SOMEONE WHO MIGHT KNOW THE QUESTION BEFORE I ASK IT!

AND IS FOND ENOUGH OF ME TO RISK DEFYING MY MOTHER!
GREETINGS ORIUM!
MAY I ENTER?
WELCOME, INGRACHILD
THERE'S A QUESTION IN YOUR EYES.
SPIT IT ACROSS YOUR LIPS SO I MAY TASTE IT!
PERSHA, PLEASE
AND --
I
GENK
UNK
CAN'T!
INGRAS LAID HER MAGIC ON YOU I SENSE
HMMM WHAT COULD YOU WANT OF ME CAN I SEE?
MY HISTORY MY MYSTERY MY MEMORIES TO COME
AN ECHO OF WHEN THE FIRST WERE ONE?
AH

ALTWAYA!!

THE GOD KING!

THE OPPRESSOR!

THE HERETIC!

SEE HERE ALL I REMEMBER OR DO I IMAGINE IT'S ALL TANGLED

UNITED BY DISSENT THE CONSPIRATORS DARED IMAGINE

AMBITION FLARED IN BRAAG

TULITY'S HEART WENT UNREFLECTED

THE BRIGHTEST OF LOVES LED GANNISH

HOLDING NEW LIFE INSIDE CHANGED INGRA

ORIUM THE SEER WITH CORRUPTED VISION

BOUND TO THE FALSEHOOD OF HIS SIGHT!

AN ALLIANCE WAS FORMED

A TRAP WAS LAID!

FOOLS DARED TO DREAM

WE TRULY BELIEVED WE WERE DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT!

AS I REMEMBER

TULITY TOOK THE BOLD STEP, THE TRAIL THAT CANNOT BE TURNED BACK UPON

TRENIN GAINED THE NAME [illegible] WHO'S THERE? INGRA?

PERSHA

GOOD GIRL

HUNTER WITH HER KILL

YOUR MOTHER LOST INTEREST IN BRAAG AFTER TULITY'S DEATH

OR DID BRAAG LOSE INTEREST IN AMBITION BEFORE

GANNISH LOST WHAT HE LOVED MOST

WAS THAT BEFORE THE OTHER LOSSES?

WE JUST COULDN'T SEE CLEARLY ENOUGH!

I COULDN'T SEE BEFORE

AND WHEN DID INGRA WREST CONTROL?

AFTER

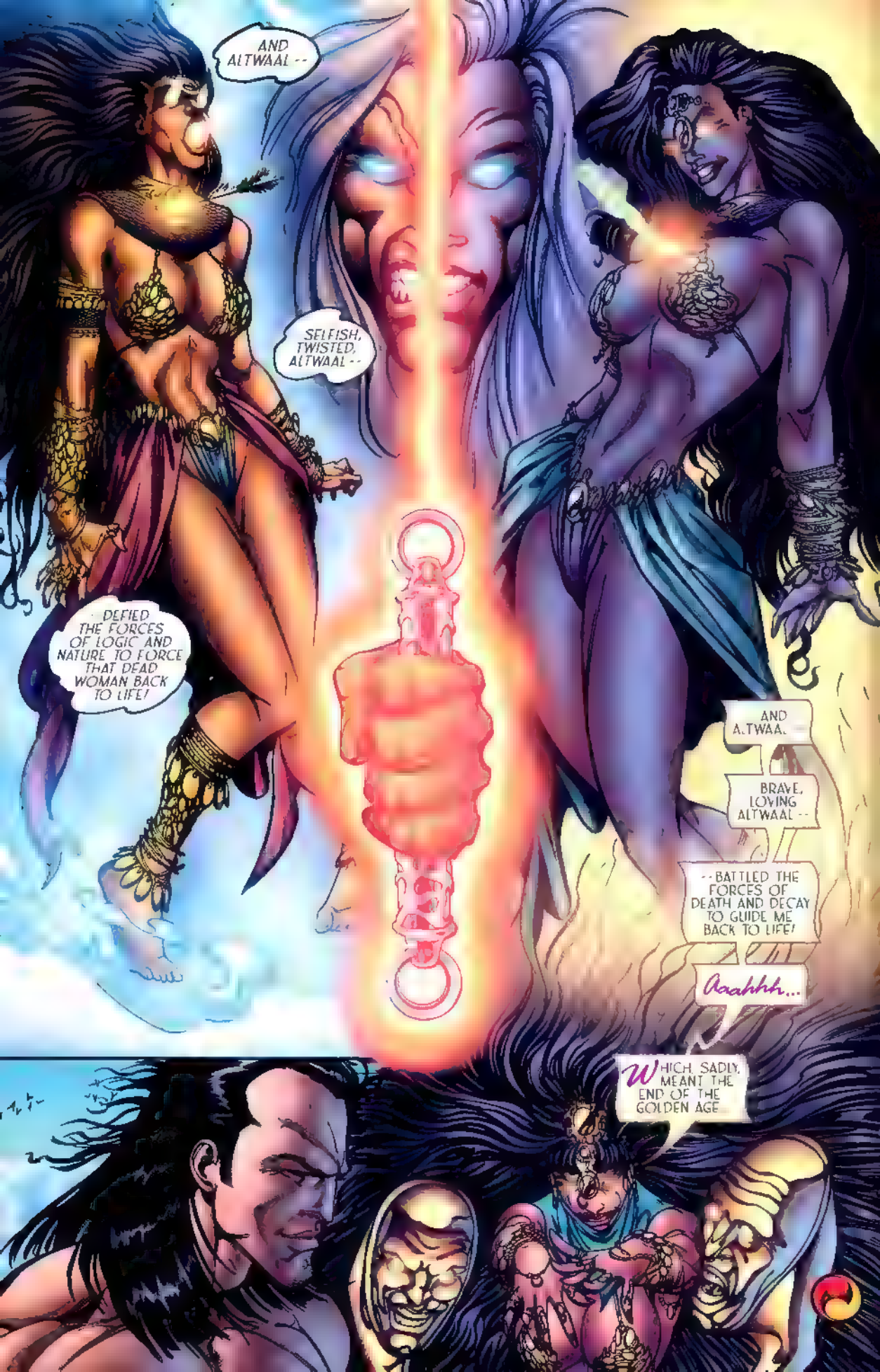
EVERYTHING HAPPENED AFTER

...AFTER THE DEATH OF RAAMIA AND THE MONSTER ALTWAALS NEXT ACT

THE GIRL WAS DEAD, YOU SEE

BUT ALTWAAL WOULD NOT ACCEPT DEATH!

SO HE REACHED OUT BEYOND THE POWER OF HIS RIGHT


AND ALTWAAL --
SELFISH, TWISTED, ALTWAAL --
DEFIED THE FORCES OF LOGIC AND NATURE TO FORCE THAT DEAD WOMAN BACK TO LIFE!
AND ALTWAAL --
BRAVE, LOVING ALTWAAL --
-- BATTLED THE FORCES OF DEATH AND DECAY TO GUIDE ME BACK TO LIFE!
Aaahhh...
WHICH, SADLY, MEANT THE END OF THE GOLDEN AGE...

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WRITER

Bart
SEARS
PENCILER

Andy
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LETTERER

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THE FIRST™

Barbara Kesel
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IN THE BEGINNING...

own personal time.

left behind on that world.

INGRA
the SEETHING BEAUTY

ORIUM
the ORACLE

GANNISH
the SUFFERER

YALA
the WARRIOR WOMAN

TRENIN
the HUNTER

PYREM
the DIPLOMAT

PERSHA

SEAHN
He pursues truth through beauty

Seahn visits Raamla for information about the long-lost Altwaal and his powerful weapon and hears the story of her death – and resurrection – by Altwaal. Persha, a spell of compulsion not to speak of reuniting the two Houses placed on her by her mother Ingra, goes to Orium for the story of Altwaal. Both stories tell the tale of Raamla's death and rebirth, but not the same way...

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ALTWAAL, YOU SEE, WAS GREATER THAN THE GREATEST OF US, BUT EVEN HIS WISDOM HAD LIMITS
HE DIDN'T EVEN LOOK BEYOND THE PASSION OF HIS ACT WHEN HE BROUGHT ME BACK FROM THE LAND OF THE DEAD TO SEE THE TROUBLE IT MIGHT CAUSE
HE SIMPLY VIOLATED THE NATURAL ORDER AND WILLED IT TO BE HIS WAY
I DID NOT SEE HIS ACTIONS SO CLEARLY THEN
ALL I KNEW WAS THAT I HAD KNOWN THE COLD KISS OF DEATH IN HIS STEAD BUT ALTWAALS POWER HAD WARMED ME BACK TO LIGHT AND LIFE!

BUT STILL I HAD BEEN KILLED WHICH LEFT THE MATTER OF WHO HAD BEEN MY ASSASSIN AN UNRESOLVED MYSTERY

AS BRAAG AND INGRA SLIPPED FROM THE SCENE OF MY RESURRECTION

THROE CAN YOU TELL US WHO PERPETRATED THIS COWARDLY ACT?

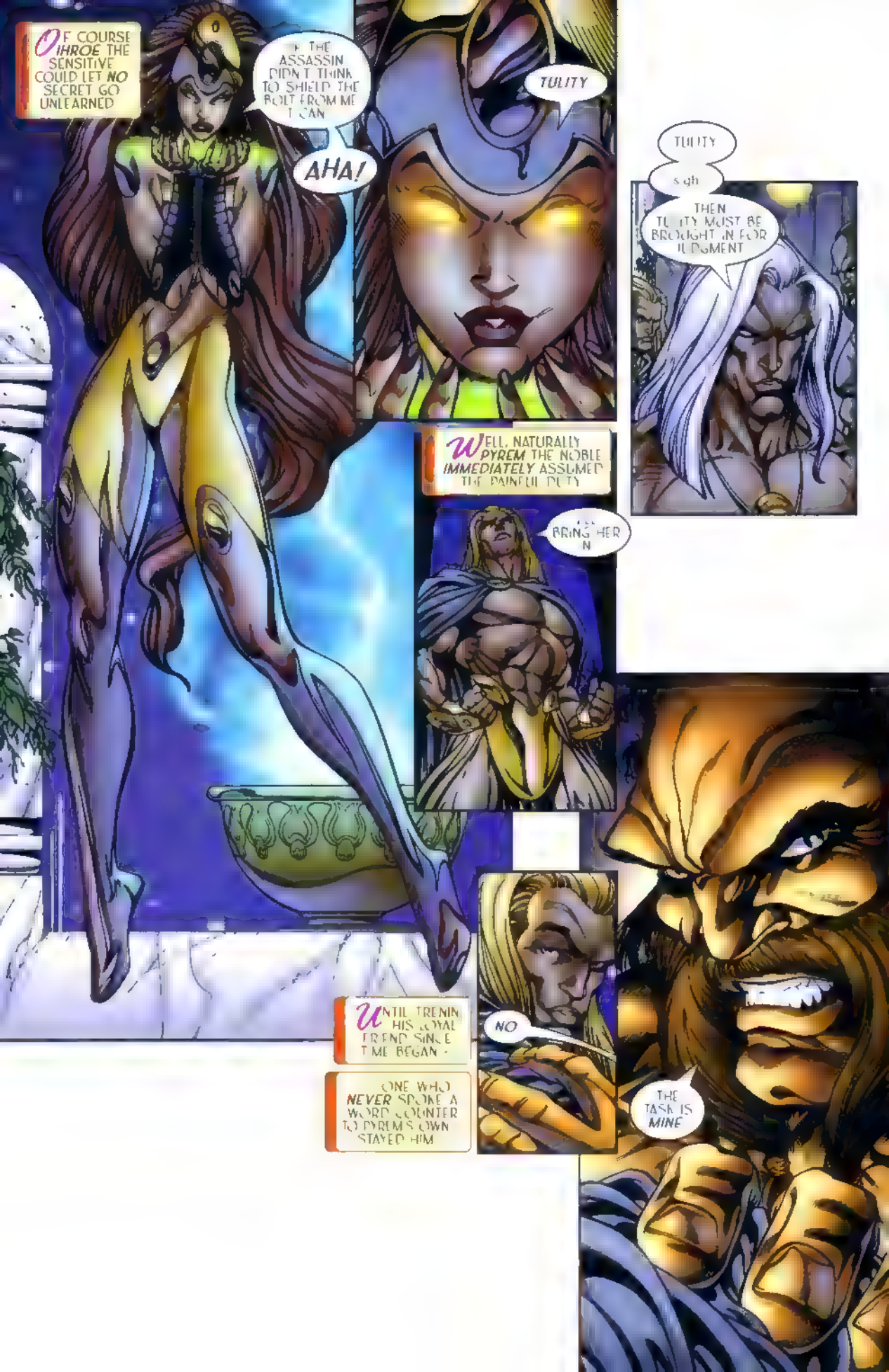
AAAAAH!

TRENIN AND PYREM KEPT CLOSE TO ALTWAAL WHILE HE CAME TO TERMS WITH EVIDENCE OF A CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIM

ONE LOOK BETRAYED ORUM'S HORRIFYING REALIZATION OF THE ASSASSIN'S IDENTITY

AND EVERYONE KNEW WHAT WAS DRIVING GANNISH AND THE WARRIOR WOMAN APART

BUT I CARED ABOUT NONE OF THAT AT THE TIME ALL I KNEW WAS THAT I HAD BEEN RETURNED TO GLORIOUS LIFE!


OF COURSE IHROE THE SENSITIVE COULD LET NO SECRET GO UNLEARNED
THE ASSASSIN DIDN'T THINK TO SHIELD THE BOLT FROM ME I CAN
AHA!
TULITY
TULITY
sigh
THEN TULITY MUST BE BROUGHT IN FOR JUDGMENT
WELL, NATURALLY PYREM THE NOBLE IMMEDIATELY ASSUMED THE PAINFUL DUTY
I'LL BRING HER IN
UNTIL TRENIN HIS LOYAL FRIEND SINCE TIME BEGAN -
ONE WHO NEVER SPOKE A WORD COUNTER TO PYREM'S OWN STAYED HIM
NO
THE TASK IS MINE

WHICH LED TRENIN DOWN
THE TRAIL IN THE DIRECTION
OF HIS DESTINY
THE HUNT

THAT'S HOW TREMAIN GOT HIS NAME, DID YOU KNOW?
HE PURSUED TUATHA FOR CENTURIES
THEN HE RETURNED WITH HER HEAD
HE'S BEEN CALLED THE HUNTER EVER AFTER
EVERYONE CHEERED
BUT IT WAS STRANGELY UNSATISFYING
I THINK I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO DO THE DEED
...myself
SO YOU AND ALTWAAL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

SEAHN
YES?
YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED
RAAMA
HE SENT YOU AWAY DIDN'T HE?
I WANTED MY OWN PRIVATE WORLD

TRUTHFULLY THE OTHERS SHUNNED ME

I WAS AN ABOMINATION

a TWAA. KIND, sweet ALTWAA. STILL CARED ABOUT ME

BUT HE WAS CAUGHT UP IN THE *UNPLEASANTNESS* THAT FOLLOWED MY MIRACLE

ALTWAAL HAD CREATED A *CRISIS!* THE FIRST WERE *TORN* AT THE ROOT!

I LED THE OPPOSITION CHIEF!

LONG BEFORE I SAW CLEARLY I SAW

MY CALLED SIGHT *TOLD* ME IT WAS TIME FOR A CHANGE!

I GATHERED DISSENTERS AND DEBATED THE FORM OF CHANGE
BUT CHANGE DID *NOT* REQUIRE ALTWAAL'S ASSASSINATION OR WHAT HAPPENED WHEN HE--
--WHEN HE
HE STILL COMES TO VISIT ME PERSHA
OH, ORIUM DOES HE?
OR DO YOU SIMPLY IMAGINE THAT HE DOES?

SO YOU DIED AND RETURNED FROM THE DEAD AND ALTWAAL DISPOSED OF YOU BECAUSE IT CREATED A POLITICAL MINUS?
Oh. NO

IT BECAME WAR

TENSIONS THAT RAN UNDER THE SURFACE BROKE THROUGH THE THIN VEIL OF CIVILITY AND GAVE BIRTH TO DISHARMONY OF A KIND FAR BEYOND THE SIMPLE WARFARE WE'D ONCE WAGED

ALTWAAL DID HIS BEST TO CONTAIN IT

BUT THE LOVE OF CONFLICT THAT IS INTERTWINED WITH OUR NATURES TOOK HOLD

AND *CHAOS* REIGNED. NOT ALTWAA.

ELYSA AND ALTWAAI WERE BEING *DESTROYED*

SOME HAD THE *SENSE* TO BREAK THE BATTLE *AWAY* FROM OUR PRECIOUS HOME

OTHERS SIMPLY FOLLOWED THEIR TRAIL

AS THE BATTLE RAGED ACROSS *WORLDS*

POOR ALTWAAL

HE'D ACTED OUT OF *LOVE* TO DEFY *DEATH*, AND FOUND HIMSELF *STEEPED* IN T

ORIUM, WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE*?

YOUR DISSENT HAS ERUPTED INTO *WAR!*

COULDN'T YOU *SEE* THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN?

COULDN'T *YOU* SEE THAT IT *MUST*?

I BELIEVE THAT THAT WAS THE MOMENT WHEN ALTWAAL LOST FAITH IN US ALL"

ALTWAAL'S ACTION MAY HAVE TRIGGERED THE FIGHTING.

BUT ALL THE FIRST SHARED THE BLAME FOR ITS ESCALATION

BOTH THE SELFISH AND THE SELFLESS BATTLED A WORLD TO DESTRUCTION

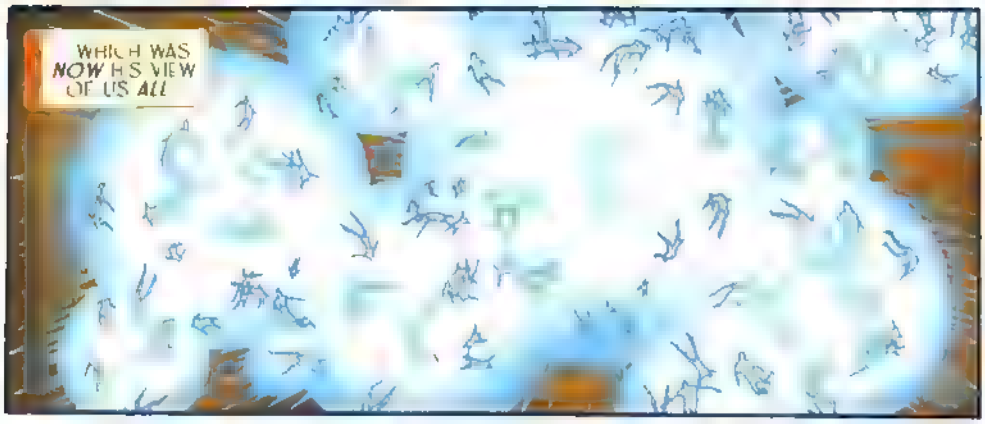
AND ALTWAAL.

MY SWEET ALTWAAL

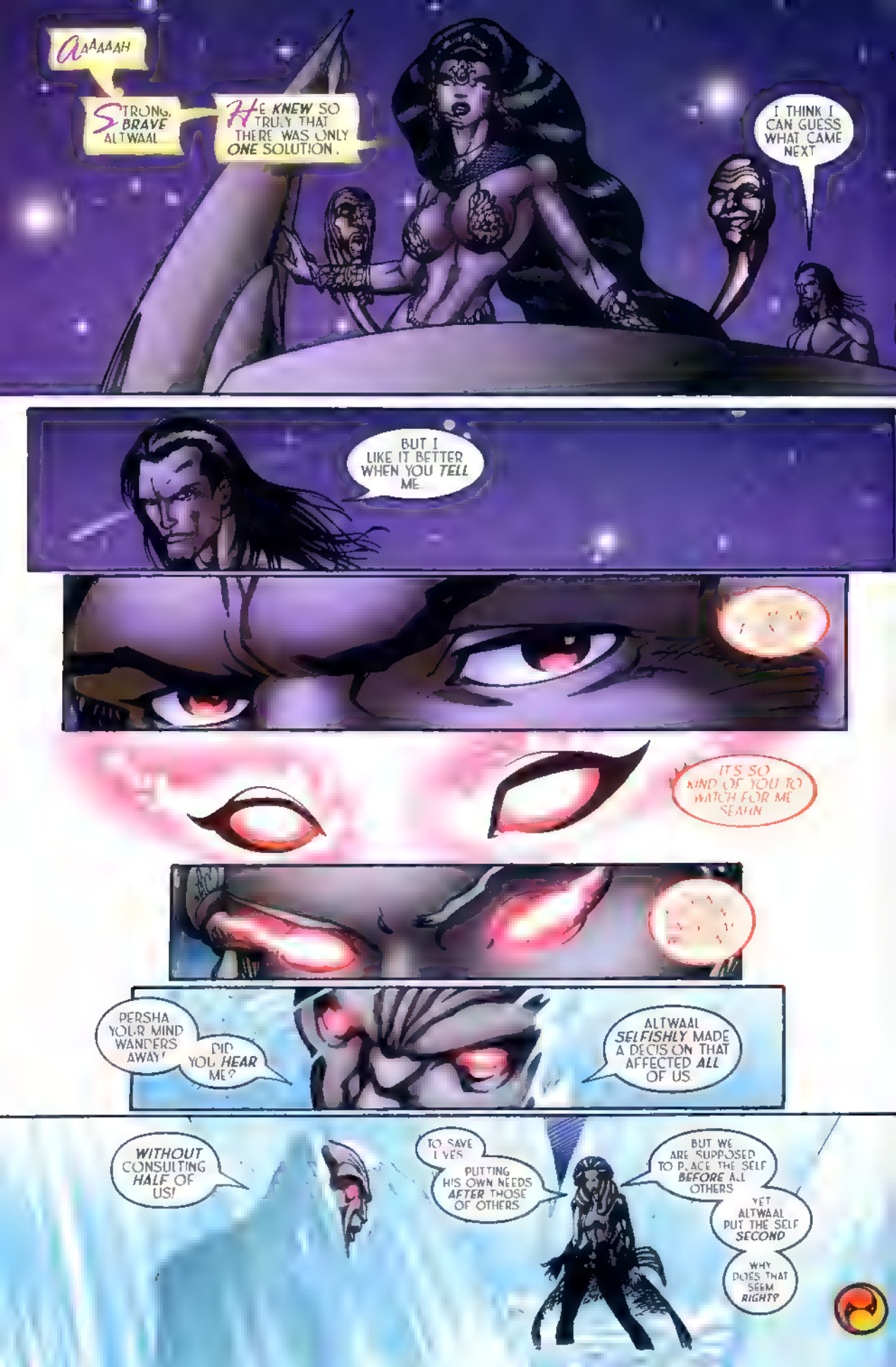
FOUND THAT HIS LIMITLESS PATIENCE

HAD REACHED ITS END

SO, AS A WORLD DIED FORGOTTEN IN OUR WAKE...
ALTWAAL SENT US ALL HOME LIKE *DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN*


WHICH WAS *NOW* HIS VIEW OF US *ALL*

SO THE *WISE* AND WONDERFUL ALTWAAL SENT US TO *TWO* PLACES, GROUPED BY OUR *ANCIENT* ALLEGIANCES
AND KEPT ONLY THOSE *CLOSEST* TO HIM CLOSE BY TO BEAR WITNESS TO HIS *AGONY*
AND *ADVISE* HIM ON A STRATEGY
THIS IS DEVASTATING! TOO MANY ARE DYING FOR ME TO BRING BACK!
THIS SCHISM CANNOT BE HEALED THIS WAY
ALTHOUGH HE *ULTIMATELY* MADE HIS *DECISION* ALONE
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO BE DONE
AS HE WAS EVER *ALONE*, EVEN IN THE MIDST OF US
AND ONLY I CAN DO IT


AAAAAH
STRONG, BRAVE ALTWAAL
HE KNEW SO TRULY THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE SOLUTION.
I THINK I CAN GUESS WHAT CAME NEXT
BUT I LIKE IT BETTER WHEN YOU TELL ME.
IT'S SO KIND OF YOU TO WATCH FOR ME SEAHN
PERSHA YOUR MIND WANDERS AWAY!
DID YOU HEAR ME?
ALTWAAL SELFISHLY MADE A DECISION THAT AFFECTED ALL OF US.
WITHOUT CONSULTING HALF OF US!
TO SAVE 1 YES
PUTTING HIS OWN NEEDS AFTER THOSE OF OTHERS
BUT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO PLACE THE SELF BEFORE ALL OTHERS
YET ALTWAAL PUT THE SELF SECOND
WHY DOES THAT SEEM RIGHT?

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with Troy Peteri
LONG AGO, in the land of Elysia..
The shining skies over Yala's spartan estate were filled with a love brighter than the eternal sun.
GANNSH MY LOVE, HOW COULD WE EVER HAVE BEEN ON OPPOSING SIDES?
THE WARS WERE CENTURIES AGO, YALA
AND OUR LOVE IS SWEETER FOR HAVING KNOWN PAIN AT ITS GENESIS

Love had made the warrior woman playful .
..and brought the philosopher out of his studies .
..to find that their already perfect world.
..had grown just a little more golden

YALA THERE'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT I HAVE TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT
TALK TALK TALK!
CAN'T YOU EVER JUST ACT?
I LEAVE THE HEROICS TO YOU AND THE FIGHTERS YOU TRAIN HERE
MY DUTY IS TO THINK
AND I'VE HAD A LOT TO THINK ABOUT LATELY

ME, AMONG ALL YOUR OTHER IMPORTANT THOUGHTS
YOU ARE BY FAR MY DEAREST THOUGHT BUT .
THERE S SOMETHING ALMOST AS IMPORTANT HAPPENING
A SELECT FEW OF US HAVE BEEN GATHERING TOGETHER, AND THE MOST INCRED BLE NEW IDEAS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED
NEW IDEAS? GANNISH WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
LOOK
THE TOWER
THE SIGN OF ALTWAAL S GOVERNANCE OF JS ALL
IMAGINE IT GONE
MAGINE A WORLD OF PERFECT EQUALITY ALL MEN THEIR OWN LEADERS

GANNISH!
YOU'RE TALKING TREASON -- WHO'S BEEN DISCUSSING THIS?
WHO?
YOU CAN'T JUST SPECULATE ABOUT THE OVERTHROW OF OUR PREDESTINED LEADER!
ALTWAAL *IS* AND ALWAYS *WAS* THE FIRST OF THE FIRST!
NOT OVERTHROW WHEN ALTWAAL HEARS OUR REASONING, HE'LL STEP ASIDE
IT'S NATURAL EVOLUTION
IN SIMPLER DAYS, ONE LEADER WORKED FOR ALL PEOPLE BUT NOT ANYMORE
EVOLUTION? WHAT YOU SUGGEST IS AN INVITATION TO CHAOS!
GANNISH, THESE *SELECT FEW* ARE PLAYING WITH YOUR IMAGINATION AND GOOD NATURE
WHO ARE THEY?
WHAT OTHER *INTERESTING* IDEAS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED?
TELL ME!
YALA THEY'RE *MY* IDEAS
THEY LISTEN TO *ME*

IN THE BEGINNING, IT WAS NATURAL TO SET APART ONE OVER ALL
THE FIRST OF THE FIRST
IT WAS RIGHT TO OFFER REVERENCE AND SWEAR FEALTY TO THE ONE
BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO
NOW ALTWAAL CAN'T SEE THAT WE'RE TEARING OURSELVES APART FROM THE INSIDE
HE STILL THINKS WE'RE ALL ONE CITY BUT OUR CITY HAS *TWO* HOUSES
COULDN'T YOU CONSIDER IT FOR ME?
COULD YOU PUT ASIDE THESE THOUGHTS FOR ME?
BUT I WANT TO HAVE YOU BY MY SIDE
FOR THE SAKE OF OUR LOVE, I WON'T SAY A WORD BUT PLEASE
YOU *CAN'T* LET THIS GO ANY FURTHER
CHANGE IS INEVITABLE YALA
IT'S PART OF OUR PEOPLE'S MATURATION
I *CANNOT* BE PARTY TO THIS, GANNISH!
DON'T-
..DON'T TELL ME ANY MORE
YALA
..I DIDN'T WANT TODAY TO END THIS WAY
I KNOW

BUT IT IS ENDING, ISN'T IT?
OH GANNISH
IT MUST
SO NOW WE PART WAYS
FOREVER?
NOT FOREVER
BUT AS LONG AS THE TOWER STANDS
IT STANDS BETWEEN US

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THE FIRST

Barbara Kesel
Bart Sears
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IN THE BEGINNING...

[illegible]

From their home, Elysia, they held [illegible] over all. Worlds were created at their touch, and their only thrust was each other. Now the twin towers of [illegible] and the new city, separated by the Zeldjian rift, are united [illegible] the [illegible] of contrasts has catalyzed into fear with the [illegible] of the Sigil-Bearer, beings with powers the First did not [illegible].

[illegible] of the High Council of each House sent scarcely [illegible] to share information about the phenomenon of these newly [illegible].

[illegible] fought out the Sigil-Bearer [illegible] [illegible] to steal power from the [illegible] own personal store.

[illegible] party to the world [illegible] [illegible] armies of Shinsaza. The encounter led to the death of [illegible] and the death of the Secunder [illegible], and the loss of Altwaal's weapon, left behind on that world.

INGRA the SEETHING BEAUTY

PYREM the DIPLOMAT

ORIUM the ORACLE

TRENIN the HUNTER

GANNISH the SUFFERER

YALA the WARRIOR WOMAN

PERSHA

SEAHN
He finds answers to questions he has not asked

Raamia continues to tell Seahn the story of her lost love, Altwaal, the legendary first leader of the First who brought her back to life after she was killed in an attack aimed at Altwaal. The aftermath of her resurrection was war between the Houses, a war Altwaal knew could be ended only one way...Orium tells Persha much the same story, but he was on the other side, and Altwaal's actions don't seem so kindly to him...

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YOU COME SEEKING TRUTHS OF A TIME LONG IGNORED BY SEERS AND FOOLS ALIKE
MY EYES SEE TRUE
SAW TRUE
-SAW NOT TRUE BEFORE ALTWAAL!
BUT I DO REMEMBER THAT DAY

OUR KING

OUR BETRAYER

HE WHO SET THE FIRST AT WAR AGAINST OURSELVES!

KNOWING DEATH PAIN THE SENSITIVES AMONG US SUFFERED TWICE

BUT ALTWAAL KNEW NO MERCY!

AFTER HE GOADED US INTO BATTLE--

--HE THEN PRESUMED TO *END* IT!

HE FORCED US INTO TWO CAMPS WITHOUT EVER HONORING THE ARGUMENT OF OUR DISSENT!

IT WAS NO LONGER TRUE THAT ONE SHOULD RULE ALL, THAT ALTWAAL SHOULD BE PLACED A STEP ABOVE THE FIRST!

BUT ALTWAAL DENIED US

IN THE ARROGANCE OF HIS FURY--

ALTWAAL MADE HIMSELF GOD AMONG GODS!

BUT HE PAID THE PRICE

ORIUM?
GO ON
THE PRICE
ALTWAAL HAD STOPPED THE WAR BY ISOLATING THE HOUSES
AND THEN?
YOU SAID TULITY DIED. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER CONSPIRATORS?
CONSPIRATORS?
EEYAUGH!
WHO?
HE'S COME --
IT'S JUST ME ORIUM
PERSHA
GO BACK TO YOUR MEMORIES
MY DREAMS
PLEASE I THINK IT'S VITALLY IMPORTANT
I JUST NEED TO KNOW

I ACHED TO SEE LOVE TORN APART
FRAGMENTS
WAS SO BLIND BLIND
YOU FOOL! WHY D.DN'T YOU WARN US!
THIS STUPIDITY IS ACCOMPLISHING NOTHING!
WE FACE DEATH FOR THIS?
ECHOES
FROM NOW ON--
I KNEW
I KNEW
IT WAS MY BURDEN TO KNOW
BUT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND UNTIL THE CREATURE ALTWAAL FORCED TRUE SIGHT ON ME
WHAT S INSIDE MY EYES?
YOU VE CROSSED THE BOUNDARY, CHILD--
--SEE MY MEMORIES
KNOW THE AGONIES OF MY SOUL
I AIEEEYAUGH!
MEMORIES
COULD ONLY CRY OUT AS THEY FLED TO WAGE AN UNWINNABLE WAR
BUT, ORIUM
WITNESSED THE CONNECTION-- AS THE CHILD GREW, SO DID INGRA'S NEED FOR CONTROL
YOU'RE NO LONGER FIT TO LEAD US!
OVERWHELMED BY THE STING OF HER BETRAYAL
TORMENTS!

NOOOO!
GNN!
I KNOW BETTER THAN TO SPY ON YOUR MADNESS, POOR FOOL.
A PITY I CAN'T HELP YOU OR M'NOR. HAVE YOU HELPED ME SOLVE THE RIDDLE OF ALTWAAL.
BUT YOU'VE GIVEN ME TRUTHS COUCHED IN YOUR DELIRIUM.
ADDING THIS TO RAAMIA'S VERSION GIVES ME SOME SENSE OF THE TRUTH IN BETWEEN.
SEARCH

SO
YOU DIED, ALTWAAL FIXED YOU EVERYBODY FOUGHT HE SENT YOU ALL HOME, AND ?
RAAMIA
YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED TO ALTWAAL
IN TIME
YOU MUST LEARN TO ENJOY THE MOMENT, SEAHN
ENJOY ?
I WISH ALL MY INFORMATION GATHERING WAS SO FRUITFUL
CARE TO TELL ME MORE?
ME
AAAAAH
IF YOU ONLY KNEW HOW VIVID THESE PRECIOUS MEMORIES SEEM
AND THEY ARE BUT THE FAINTEST REFLECTION OF THE MAJESTY THAT WAS
ALTWAAL

THE PASSION FOR BATTLE STILL BURNED HOT WITHIN THE BELLY OF BOTH HOUSES

BEING SEPARATED BY ALTWAAL STOPPED THE WARFARE FOR ONLY A SHORT TIME

ALTWAALS RESOLVE WAS FIRM HIS DECISION WAS SET AND IRREVOCABLE

SO HE SPOKE THE WORD THAT WAS BOTH WISH AND COMMAND

Stop.

AND THE WORD BECAME DEED

THE FORCE OF HIS CRY

FROZE THEM IN WONDER

AS ALTWAA CALLED FORTH THE PRIMAL FORCES OF CREATION

HE ROBBED US!

DESTRUCTION RAINED DOWN FROM THE HIGH HOLY ALTWAA.

AS HE *STOLE* FROM US

DRAWING POWER FROM THE LAND BENEATH US THE WALLS AROUND US

ALL TO FUEL HIS ULTIMATE ACT

OF CONTEMPT!

OH, THE *LOVE* ALTWAAL SHOWED FOR US!

HIS BRAVERY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE RIFT OF OUR PHILOSOPHIES WAS GREATER THAN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT UNITED US

AND THAT WE WERE AT HEART TWO VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLES

TO MY SIDE DEXTER, I CALL THOSE WHO PLACE THE NEEDS OF OTHERS BEFORE SELF

TO MY SIDE SINISTER, I CALL THOSE WHO PLACE THE SELF BEFORE ALL.

TO COME TOGETHER, YOU MUST CROSS THE LIVING MANIFESTATION OF YOUR DIFFERENCES, THE EIDOLON RIFT

BUT NOT UNTIL SOME NECESSARY TIME HAS PASSED

AND NOT WITHOUT COST

CHOOSE SIDES NOW

SO WE CHOSE

MOST CHOSE TO STAY WHERE THEY'D BEEN PLACED. SOME CROSSED THE RIFT TO THE OTHER SIDE. AND SOME

SOME WERE TORN APART BY THE DECISION, BUT NONE SO LITERALLY AS POOR TORMENTED GANNISH

WHO BEARS TO THIS DAY THE SCARS OF CLINGING TO HIS LOVE

MMM

WITH SO MUCH LOVE OUT THERE FOR THE TAKING, WHY CHOOSE ONE SO DIFFICULT TO HOLD?

AND NO LECTURES ABOUT LOVE, RAAMIA

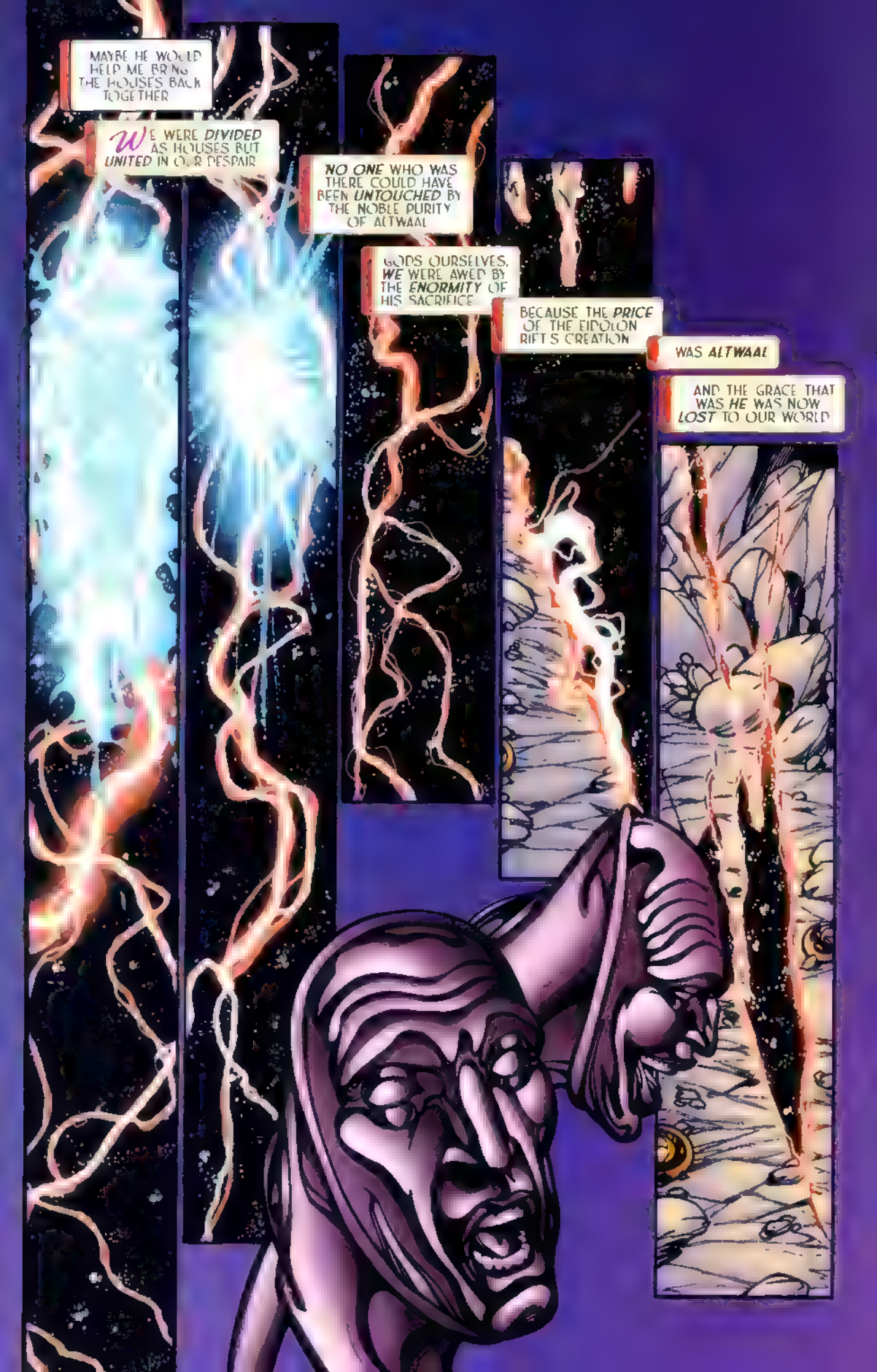
IT'S JUST A PRACTICAL OBSERVATION

SO ALTWAAL RIPPED OPEN REALITY AND CREATED HOUSE DEXTER AND HOUSE SINISTER AND

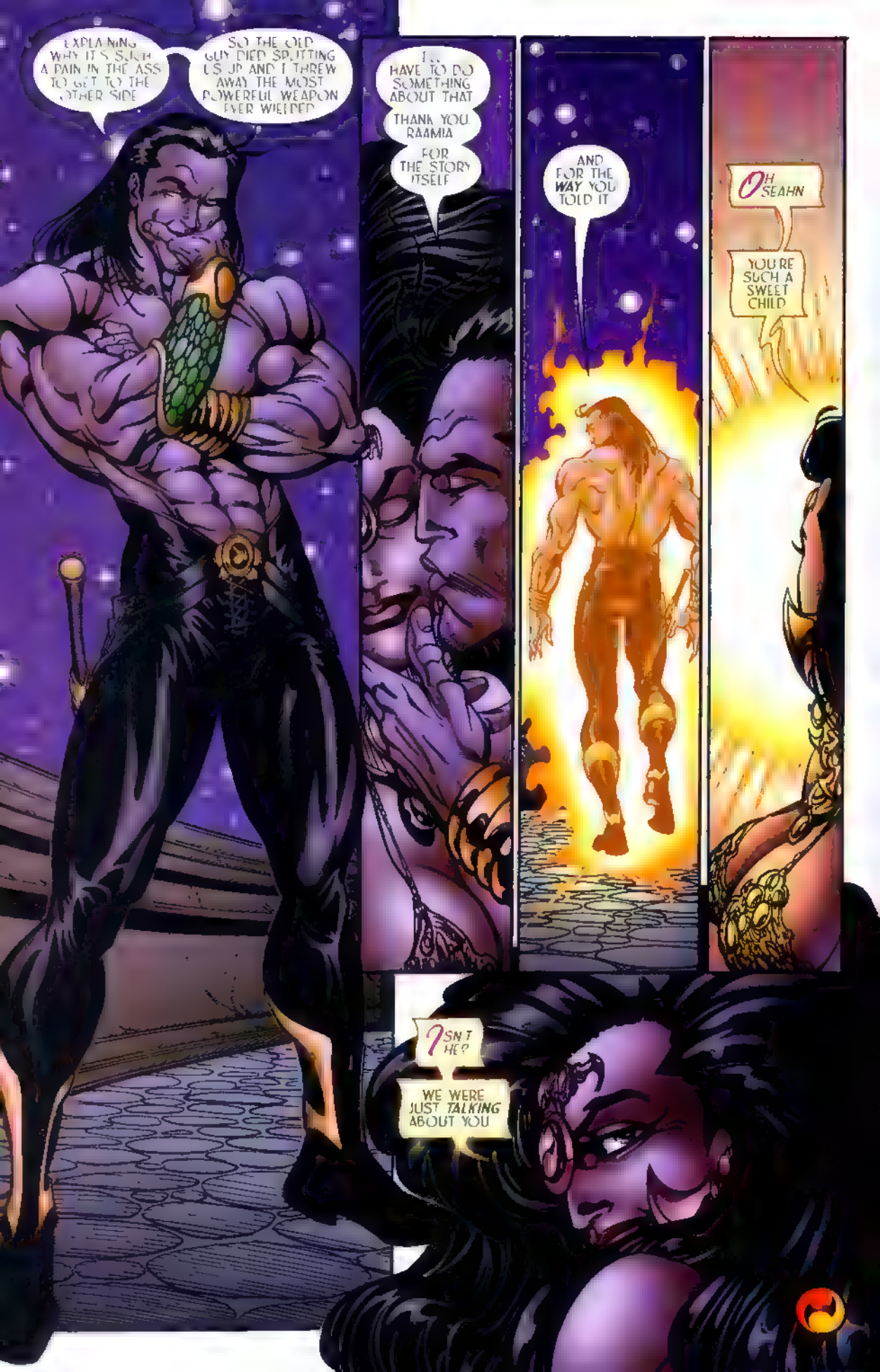
GO ON

TWO HOUSES WERE CREATED, ONE AND DESTROYED!
IGNORING ARMAGEDDON, THE MADMAN PAUSED
TO BERATE A FOOL
ORIUM WAS YOUR SIGHT SO FLAWED YOU DID NOT SEE WHAT HAD TO COME FROM YOUR REBELLION?
FROM NOW ON, YOU WILL
TIME TWISTED
THE SEER LOOKED BOTH FORWARD AND BACK

SEEING BOTH CLEARLY FOR THE FIRST TIME
THE SUDDEN RUPTURE OF TRUSTED LIES WAS TOO MUCH TO BEAR
TOO MUCH
I MISSED THE MOMENT OF HIS PASSING
A'TWAAL IS DEAD TO MOST NOW, A CORRUPTED CREATURE LOST IN THE RIFT'S CREATION
BUT I SEE ONLY TRUTH
I SEE HIM OLD
DO I DREAM?
MAYBE YOU DON'T MAYBE HE IS ALIVE, HIDDEN SOMEWHERE
IF I COULD FIND HIM, HE WAS THE ONE WHO UNDERSTOOD WHY ELYSIA HAD TO BE DIVIDED


MAYBE HE WOULD HELP ME BRING THE HOUSES BACK TOGETHER
WE WERE DIVIDED AS HOUSES BUT UNITED IN OUR DESPAIR
NO ONE WHO WAS THERE COULD HAVE BEEN UNTOUCHED BY THE NOBLE PURITY OF ALTWAAL
GODS OURSELVES, WE WERE AWED BY THE ENORMITY OF HIS SACRIFICE
BECAUSE THE PRICE OF THE EIDOLON RIFT'S CREATION
WAS ALTWAAL
AND THE GRACE THAT WAS HE WAS NOW LOST TO OUR WORLD

..LEAVING ONLY THE SIGN OF HIS PASSING..
THE CITY ITSELF MARKED FOREVER WITH THE SIGILS OF THE TWO HOUSES..
..AND ONLY ONE BRIDGE ACROSS THE EIDOLON TO CONNECT US


EXPLAINING WHY IT'S SUCH A PAIN IN THE ASS TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE
SO THE OLD GUY DIED SPLITTING US UP AND I THREW AWAY THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON EVER WIELDED
I... HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT
THANK YOU, RAAMIA
FOR THE STORY ITSELF
AND FOR THE WAY YOU TOLD IT
OH SEAHN
YOU'RE SUCH A SWEET CHILD
ISN'T HE?
WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT YOU

Barbara Kesel
WRITER
Bart Sears
PENCILER
Andy Smith
INKER
Michael Atiyeh
COLORIST
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LETTERER
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created by
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Chief Operating Officer
Michael A. Beattie
Chief Financial Officer
Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
James Breithed
Director of
Marketing & Distribution
Ian M. Feller
Manager Media Relations
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Brandon Peterson
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THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel
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Paul Mounts

IN THE BEGINNING...

They were the First.
From their home, Elysia, they held power over all. Worlds were created at their touch, and their only threat was each other. Now the twin towers of [illegible] and the new city, separated by the Eidolon rift, are united in a [illegible] the ennui of centuries has catalysed into fear with the discovery of the Sigil-Bearers, beings with powers the First did not [illegible].

Three members of the High Council of each House met secretly within the [illegible] to share information about the phenomenon of these newly-[illegible].

Dexter the Hunter Sought out the Sigil-Bearer [illegible] inexplicably able to steal power from the [illegible] own personal store.

[illegible] party to the world [illegible] Tedest, where the [illegible] the [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible] of Tedest and the death of the Seventeen Keepers, and the loss of Altwaal's weapon, left behind on that world.

INGRA the SEETHING BEAUTY

PYREM the DIPLOMAT

ORIUM the ORACLE

TRENIN the HUNTER

GANNISH the SUFFERER

YALA the WARRIOR WOMAN

PERSHA
[illegible]

SEAHN
Revenge points him away from his House

Raamia the storyteller has told Seahn the story of her lost love Altwaal, the beloved first leader of the First who ripped apart reality to create the Eidolon rift between the warring Houses Dexter and Sinister. The mad seer Orium, however, has told Persha the same story with an ominous twist: the dictator Altwaal created the Eidolon to punish a conspiracy of freethinkers.

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Truth is a reality rooted in perception. If evidence exists to suggest verity, we accept.
Yet what if life itself could be created of nothing? If killed, would it truly die?
VECHEM?
VECHEM!
EEEEYAUGH!
HELP HIM!

IT'S CLEARLY MURDER, BUT THE KILLER'S TRAIL IS CORRUPTED

I FELT THAT, TOO

THROE CAN *YOU* TELL US WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

I'M TRYING, PYREM, BUT IT'S SO BLANK

OTHER THAN THE INITIAL WAVE OF TRAUMA THAT ALERTED ME TO CALL YOU, I SENSE *NOTHING*

GIVE ME ANOTHER MOMENT

I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, ARDIA

HHWWWNNNH

NOTHING!
THERE IS SIMPLY NO RESONANCE
IT IS AS THOUGH ALL TRACE OF IDENTITY HAS BEEN WIPED CLEAN BUT THAT'S NOT POS
THE LAST IMAGES I'M GETTING ARE OF A MEETING WITH SEAHN...
BUT THEY'RE NOT LINKED TO VECHEM'S DEATH...
SEAHN!
THAT SICKENING PRETENDER!
HE WAS BADGERING US, TRYING TO GET US TO SUPPORT SOME IDIOTIC PLAN OF HIS...!
AND NOW HE'S KILLED MY MATE?
YOU CAN'T LET THIS GO UNPUNISHED!
GET HIM FOR THIS, PYREM!
MAKE HIM FEEL THE PAIN I FEEL
I KNOW YOU FEEL IT!
YOU'RE OUR LEADER! IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO METE OUT JUSTICE!
TELL ME YOU WILL!

ARDIA, YOU KNOW I WILL DO EVERYTHING I MUST
REST NOW I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT
ANYTHING MORE THROE?
NO
I DON'T THINK THERE WAS ANYONE WHO COULD HIDE ANYTHING FROM ME BUT EVIDENTLY
THERE IS
I'LL TAKE THE HUNT FROM HERE
CAUTIOUSLY, TRENN
IF THIS INCIDENT LEADS TO SEAHN LET ME KNOW AND IT WILL BE DEALT WITH
BUT THIS ABILITY TO MASK EVENTS FROM THROE THAT SPEAKS OF SOMETHING BIGGER
PERHAPS TIED TO THOSE SIGIL BEARERS
I DON'T LIKE THE FEEL OF THIS

If we take a step to eliminate that which should not exist in our world, are we serving the true order of things—or our own selfish desire for control?
Should mistakes, even those of fate, be corrected?
ENSON, WE'VE GOT TO START SHAKING THINGS UP AROUND HERE
I'M DOING MY BEST TO RALLY SUPPORT AMONG MY PEERS BUT SO MANY ARE CHOOSING TO BE SO PASSIVE
TOO OMINOUS
YOU'RE TELEGRAPHING YOUR REBELLION
CHOOSE SOMETHING MORE INVITING
I'M TRYING TO GALVANIZE THE FIRST TO RECOGNIZE AND DEFEND AGAINST THE THREAT OF THE SIGIL-BEARERS AND YOU'RE CONCERNED THAT MY CHOICE OF ATTIRE WILL FRIGHTEN PEOPLE AT THE CEREMONY?
SEAHN, YOU'LL GAIN NO CREDIBILITY WITH THOSE WHO GET THE IMPRESSION YOUR MOTIVES ARE STRICTLY PERSONAL
YOU KNOW EVERYTHING DON'T YOU?
NOT YET
LET'S GO
POOR KERSPAN

HE WOULD HAVE LOVED THIS
I SUMMON ALL TO COME TOGETHER—TIME TO GATHER FOR REMEMBRANCE
HAVING EVERYONE GATHER IN HIS MEMORY - WHAT A FARCE!
MURDERER
WHAT? ARDIA, I DIDN'T KILL HIM! IT WAS THAT SIGIL-BEARER NOT ME!
NOT KERSPAN. ARDIA'S MATE WAS KILLED LAST NIGHT
I BELIEVE THERE'RE SOME WHO CONNECT THE CRIME TO YOU
IS THAT WHAT THEY THINK?
SO THIS IS THE PRICE OF MY QUEST ON NG THE OLD WAYS --
--I'M SUDDENLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL CRIMES?
SEAHN.
REMEMBER WHY WE'RE HERE

WELCOME, FRIENDS!

OUR TRAGEDY IS DOUBLED WITH THE DISCOVERY OF VECHEM'S DEATH, AND ARDIA CERTAINLY DESERVES OUR SUPPORT AT THE LOSS OF HER LOVE

BUT LET US DIRECT OUR MEMORIES TOWARD THE LOST ***KERSPAN***, FALLEN IN BATTLE, WHOSE MEMORY WE HAVE GATHERED HERE TO CELEBRATE

AS A SINGLE MEMBER OF OUR HOUSE IS LOST SO IS THE LIGHT OF OUR HOUSE DIMINISHED

LOOK AT THEM LOOKING AT ME

THEY ALL THINK I'M THE REASON WE'RE HERE AND WILL BE HERE AGAIN

I'VE HEARD ALL THE RUMORS ALREADY, SEAHN

I DON'T BELIEVE THEM

I'M STICKING BY YOU

I APPRECIATE THAT V'HAM

SAD DAY I'LL MISS KERSPAN

WHOM YOU HATED, AS I RECALL

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF I LIKED HIM OR NOT - HIS DEATH WAS STILL AN AFFRONT

GO AHEAD AND BE MAD SEAHN - YOU'VE BEEN ACCUSED OF WORSE

NOW THAT THE SUMMONING IS COMPLETE AND THE RING IS JOINED
LET US DEMONSTRATE OUR RESPECT FOR OUR BROTHER IN AN OUTPOURING OF THE POWER OF LIFE
JOIN NOW TO REMEMBER KERSPAN
LET US SEND OUR ENERGIES TO MIX AND MERGE IN HIS HONOR
AS WE BEND OUR MINDS TO HIS IMAGE THIS LAST TIME
BEFORE LETTING HIM BECOME ONE WITH THE ETERNAL LIGHT WHOSE BEAUTY AND BRIGHTNESS SHALL NEVER FADE UNTIL THE END OF ALL
I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE MORE SATISFYING
I'M SORRY KERSPAN
THIS IS *NOT* ENOUGH
YOU *WILL* BE AVENGED

PYREM AND THE HIGH COUNCIL-- I DON'T GET IT!
THEY ALL BUT THREW KERSPAN AWAY AND NOW THEY'RE ALL SO PIOUS AND CARING
THAT'S NOT UNUSUAL, SEAHN
THEY'RE JUST KEEPING TO TRADITION
IT'S THE ETERNAL CIRCLE BECAUSE IT HAS ALWAYS *BEEN* SO, IT MUST FOREVER *BE* SO
THAT'S OUR PROBLEM
HOUSE DEXTER IS *MIRED* IN TRADITION
I DON'T KNOW WHY I EVEN BOTHER - I'M COUNTING ILLUSIONS IF I THINK I'LL EVER GET ANY KIND OF ACTIVE RESISTANCE ORGANIZED *HERE*
WE MIGHT AS WELL OPEN EGYS'A TO THE SIGIL-BEARERS AND PRAY THEY POWER *OUR* REMEMBRANCE CEREMONIES
IF HOUSE DEXTER IS SO RESISTANT
THEN IS IT TIME TO LOOK BEYOND HOUSE DEXTER?
TO THE LEADER OF THE OTHER HOUSE, PERHAPS?
DO YOU AGREE NEGRA?

HE SEES ME?
HOW CAN THAT BE?

WHO WAS THAT?
ORIUM!
HOW COULD HE HAVE DONE THAT?
DONE WHAT?
YOU WOULD PRESUME TO PLAY GAMES WITH ME, OLD FOOL?
CAREFUL - DON'T MAKE FOOLISH MISTAKES ORIUM
YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE MY BAD SIDE

I need answers but have only questions.

What is to be done about this wild streak of creation that has been displayed before my eyes?

Do we have the right or the obligation to fight this aberration?

READY!

YOU AGAIN?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO OFFER ME A CHALLENGE!

KAAAIEE-YA!

NNGH!

KERANNNG

HA!

KRAT

PERSHA!

JUST WAIT SH NNSA MY WARRIOR HAS A FEW SURPRISES FOR YOU

WERE YOU ABLE TO CONVINCE INGRA?

AA -

COULDN'T

MOTHER - -

OH PERSHA!

EMPHER BE A LOVE

MIND THIS FOR ME

WHAT D THAT OLD WITCH DO TO YOU?

LET ME SEE

HAHAHA

WHY SO HESITANT?

HA!

THAT S A NEW MOVE!

YOU RE CHANG NG TACTICS TIENA?

GOOD!

AACACK!

SHHHH, PERSHA

I KNOW YOU RE BEING FORCED TO AVOID THE SUBJECT

I RECOGNIZE A CONSTRAINT WHEN IT S SO PAINFULLY OBV OUS

YOUR MOTHER S MAGICS AREN T *THAT* ADVANCED

HOLD STILL

LET ME SEE IF I CAN UNRAVEL IT

FWOOOSH

EEEYAAH!

MOTHER PLACED IT ON ME WHEN I TRIED TO ASK ABOUT--

--ABOUT--

--THAT THING YOU AND I TALKED ABOUT WYTURE!

THE

--RED!

TOGETHER!

WYTURE, COULD YOU UNRAVEL THESE CLUES SO I DON'T HAVE TO BE PARTY TO THIS TORTURE?

ABOUT THE SIGIL WE SAW ON THE MORTALS?

UH!

AH!

AND HOW IT COMBINES THE SIGILS OF THE TWO HOUSES?

NNNH!

WHAT? COMBINES THE HOUSES?

GYAAAAAACH!

KERRUNCH

THE HOUSES COMBINED?

PERSHA, WHERE DID YOU SEE THIS?

WHEN?

ANGH!

I DON'T THINK SHE CAN TELL YOU TIENA

AND EVEN YOU DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO BREAK ONE OF *INGRA'S* SPELLS

YET

I WASN'T ME... I WAS HIM

SOMEDAY I WILL

What I have observed could not have happened, and yet — my perceptions do not lie.
We are the FIRST. We create life. We mold worlds to our liking...
...we play with the shape of reality, but there are natural laws that govern even us.
We formed ourselves in the first blaze of creation, then gave birth to the Secundae and the half-bloods to populate our worlds.
The Age of Creation has passed.
...life cannot now arise among us without coming from us...
...yet it has.
I witnessed the creation of a new being as Enson of Dexter was made into another...
This scene escaped the notice of many others...
...including Ingar...

If life can be inserted among the Firsts so seamlessly—
(it appeared to cause no stir among the Dextre members nearby)
—then some of what we believe to be truth is lies.
I am troubled by these observations.
Why was I chosen to see what others let pass without thought?
OPEN.
It has always been my curse to probe beyond the obvious into the muddled depths of the unexplainable. .
...yet I detest mystery.

What I have witnessed I cannot yet share with anyone, most of all my beloved Yala, who prefers her riddles coupled with ready answers and explanations.
I fear the only answers lie on the other side of Elysia.
I must seek the solution to this incongruity, even if it turns all truth into lies.
I must...
I must be the most wretched of beings.

To my parents Antonio and Maria, for their love and strength, and my brother Gianluca for being my best friend, no matter how far away I am. — Andrea Di Vito

Barbara Kesel
WRITER

Andrea Di Vito
PENCILER

Larry Stucker
INKER

Cam Hill
ASSISTANT INKER

Paul Mounts
COLORIST

Dave Lanphear
with Troy Peteri
LETTERERS

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO

Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer

Michael A. Beattie
Chief Financial Officer

Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development

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Director of
Marketing & Distribution

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Manager Media Relations

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Head Writer

Brandon Peterson
Art Director

Pam Davies
Production
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Sylvia Bretz
Production
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Design Director

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MAY 2nd
CROSSING
THE RIFT

ALL THIS TALK ABOUT REUNIFICATION OF THE HOUSES
IT SEEMS ABSURD TO THINK WE COULD EVER COME TOGETHER AGAIN
YET WE WERE ONCE ONE
I HOLD THE LIVING PROOF IN MY HAND
HOW DIFFERENT WOULD OUR WORLD HAVE BEEN IF I'D HELD MY TONGUE ?
INGRA'S LAMENT
Barbara Kesel
SCRIPT
Andrea Di Vito
PENCILS
Andrew Kennessy & Drew Geraci
INKS
Michael Atiyeh & Jason Lambert
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LETTERS

BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO SHY AWAY FROM STATING MY DESIRES

THERE YOU ARE

NOR COULD I CONTROL WHAT THE SIGHT OF HIS FACE

THE TOUCH OF HIS HANDS

THE PASS ON THAT EXPLODED BETWEEN US

MEANT TO ME

IT WAS DESIRE

BUT COUPLED WITH ADMIRATION AND SOMETHING *MORE*

WAS IT LOVE?

WHERE *ARE* YOU PYREM?

YOU GET *SO* LOST IN THOUGHT

TODAY YES

THOUGHTS WEIGHTY ENOUGH TO TURN MY ATTENTION FROM EVEN YOU

I WAS JUST TURNING OVER SOMETHING ALTWAAL SAID

HE'S HAD A VISION INGRA

HE SAW DISSENT IN OUR OWN RANKS

THERE WILL BE A PERIOD OF DRASTIC CHANGE COMING TO ELYSIA

THEN NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY!

PYREM--

--*YOU* COULD RULE IN ALTWAAL'S STEAD!

WHAT?!

UNSEAT *ALTWAAL*?

INGRA... TO EVEN CONSIDER SUCH AN ACT GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING I BELIEVE IN!

I'D WONDER HOW YOU COULD EVEN SUGGEST IT

BUT I *KNOW* YOU

I CAN FEEL THAT YOU'RE URGING ME

WITH ALL YOUR FIRE... YOUR PASSION

...TOWARD WHAT YOU FEEL IS THE BEST PATH

BUT IT'S *WRONG*

YOU'VE CHANGED IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS

...CAN YOU FEEL IT?

I *HAVE* CHANGED

BUT NOT AS MUCH AS YOU!

THE PYREM I LOVED WAS A DYNAMIC WAR LEADER... THE COMMANDER OF ARMIES!

NOT THE FAWNING TOADY OF THE OH-SO MAGNIFICENTLY FLAWLESS *ALTWAAL*!

DO YOU *HAVE* TO LAY DOWN AND BARE YOUR BELLY TO HIM LIKE A DOG?

CAN'T YOU FIGHT FOR YOURSELF?

INGRA WE'RE NOT AT WAR NOW
THE AGE OF BATTLES IS OVER
I WON'T BETRAY ALTWAAL
NOT EVEN FOR YOU
AND I WON'T BETRAY MY
CHILD I WAS GOING TO SAY CHILD
WHY DIDN'T I?
MYSELF!
I'M SORRY YOU FEEL THAT WAY
I'M NOT SORRY I FEEL!
THE

PERSHA, HE WAS WRONG ABOUT THE BATTLES BEING OVER
HE WAS WRONG ABOUT ALTWAAI
WAS HE WRONG WHEN HE SAID HE LOVED ME?
IS THAT WHY I NEVER GOT TO TELL HIM ABOUT YOU?

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THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel
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IN THE BEGINNING...

Why were the First
From their home, Elysia, they had power over all. Worlds were created at their touch, and their only threat was each other. Now the twin towers of the old city and the new city, separated by the Eidolon rift, are united in a long mistake. The arrival of centuries has catalyzed into fear with the disparity of the Sigil-Bearers, beings with powers the First did not bestow.

Three members of the High Council of each House met secretly within the Eidolon itself to share information about the phenomenon of these newly-powered mortals.

Trenin the Hunter fought out the Sigil-Bearer Secundae Kerspan, who was inexplicably able to steal power from the hunter's own personal stone.

Trenin led a hunting party to the world of the Warhead Tedhol, where the Sigil-Bearer was leading the army of Elysia in an unavoidable war against the mass sentient armies of Sinnacea. The encounter led to the death of Tedhol and the death of the Secundae Kerspan, and the loss of Altwaal's weapon, left behind on that world.

INGRA the SEETHING BEAUTY

PYREM the DIPLOMAT

ORIUM the ORACLE

TRENIN the HUNTER

GANNISH the SUFFERER

YALA the WARRIOR WOMAN

PERSHA

SEAHN
He finds spite a useful venom

A murder has been committed, with no clues left behind except a coincidental meeting between Seahn and the victim. Trenin vows to bring in the killer. House Dexter gathers for Kerspan's remembrance ceremony, a move Seahn finds hypocritical. As Ingra spies on the ceremony, Enson seems, impossibly, to speak directly to her. Gannish has also noticed something disturbingly odd about Enson... And Persha desperately tries to communicate with her friends despite the constraint that binds her voice.

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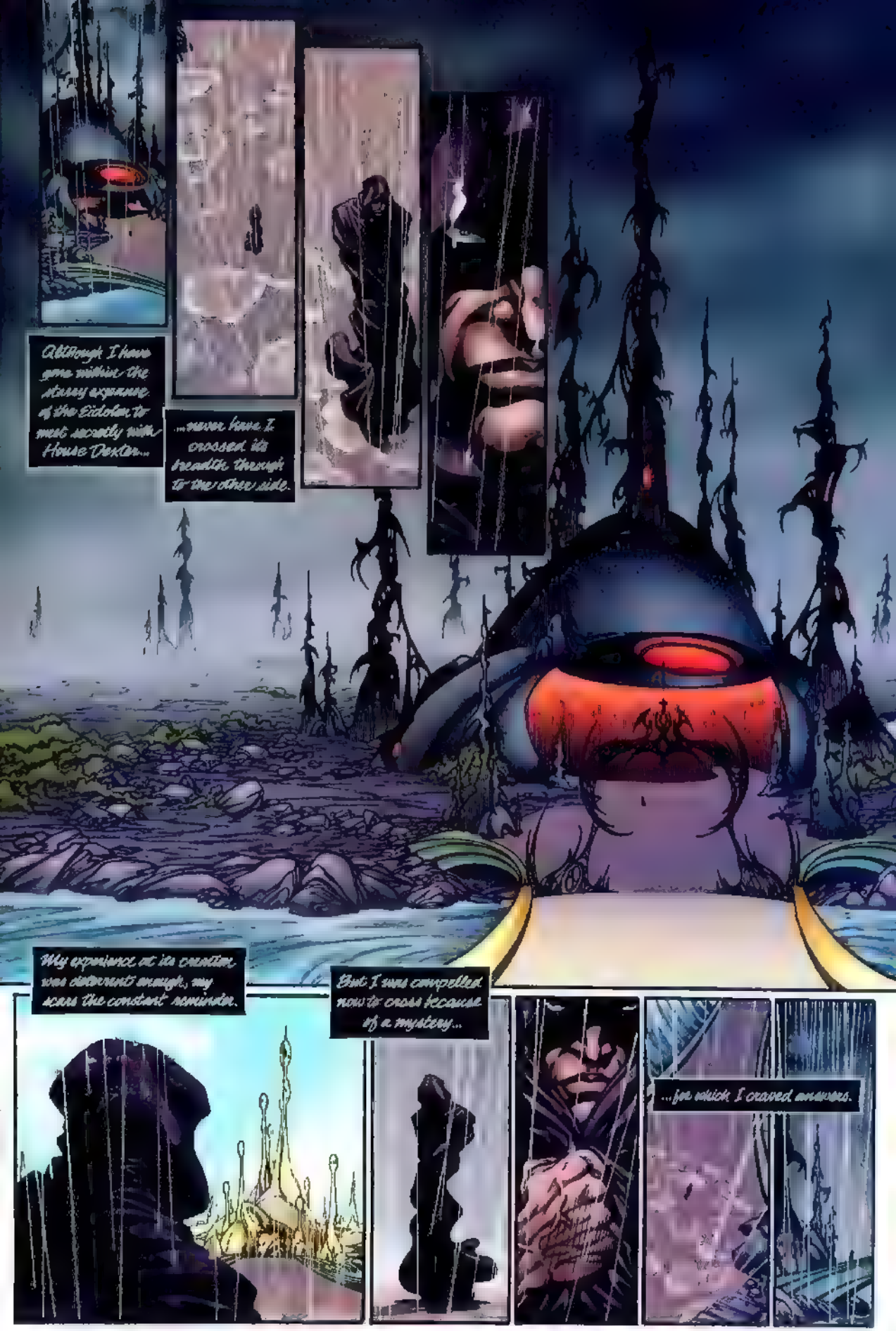

Although I have gone within the stormy expanse of the Eidolon to meet secretly with House Dexter...
...never have I crossed its breadth through to the other side.
My experience at its creation was bittersweet enough, my scars the constant reminder.
But I was compelled now to cross because of a mystery...
...for which I craved answers.

There is but one bridge to bind us, the two Houses.

Its delicacy belies the strength required for its crossing.

In proportion to my own power, was First face difficulty traversing the Eidolon.

The greater our power, the greater the resistance.

There is no pain save the loss of one's sense of majesty and the indignity of weakness...

I approached the gate resistantly, my progress slowed by the greatest of all obstacles...

...my own fear.

And fear's twin, shame.

For as many times as invited to cross, I declined.

I find I am willing to confront fear for knowledge...

...to stop the gnawing of unanswered questions.

Yet I would not make this journey before...

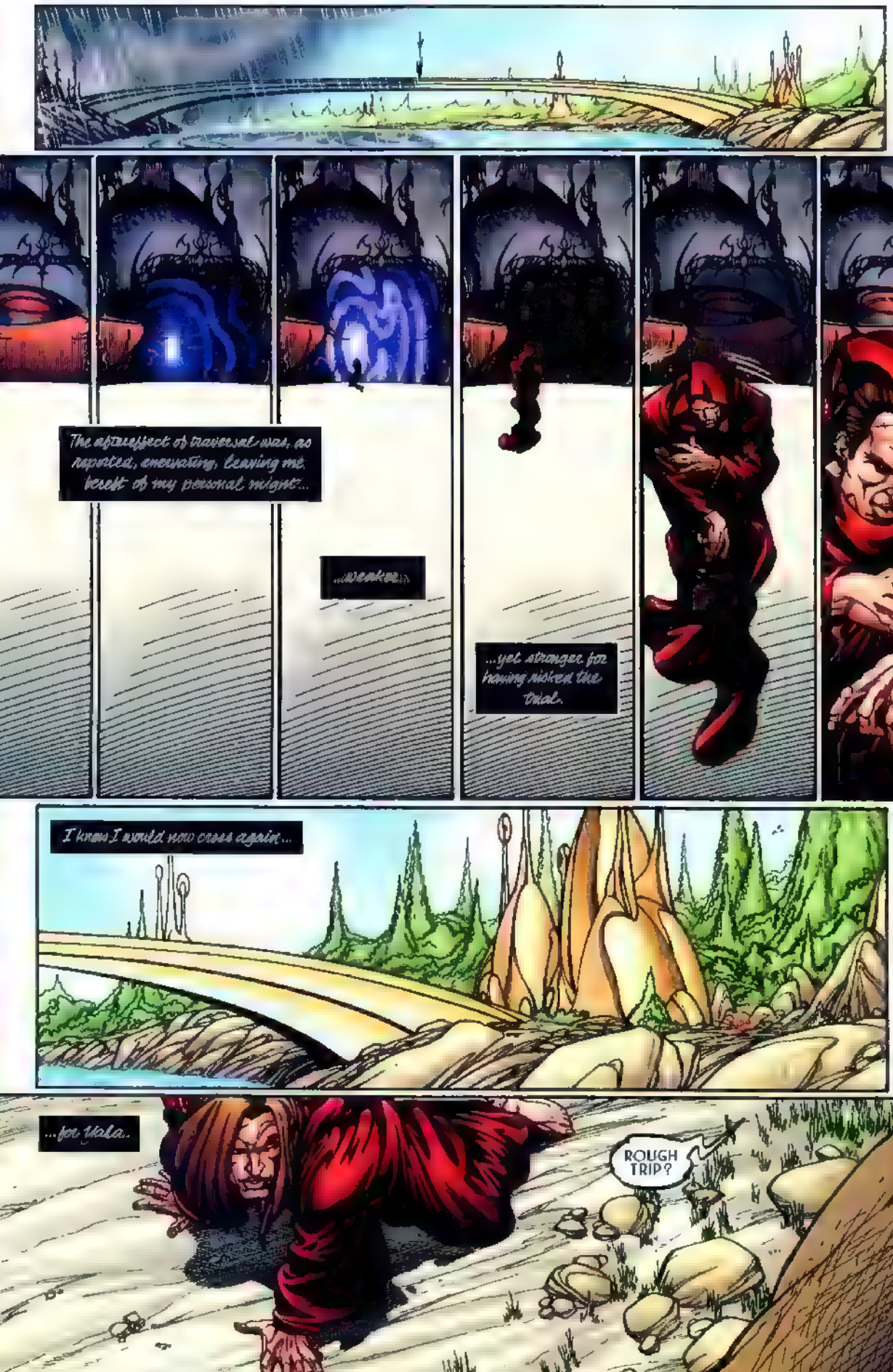
...for Yule.

I have discovered that she who is my greatest joy...

...is not my strongest lure.

While Yala rules my heart...

...it is the presence of unanswered questions that commands my soul.


The aftereffect of traversal was, as reported, enervating, leaving me bereft of my personal might...
...weaker...
...yet stronger for having risked the trial.
I knew I would now cross again...
...for Vala.
ROUGH TRIP?

WELCOME, GANNISH
ENSON
YOU KNEW I WAS COMING

THEN YOU KNOW MY QUESTION?

I SAW WHAT YOU DID DOWN ON THE WORLD OF THE SIGIL BEARER TODOSI

YOU CREATED A SECOND LIFE

--YOU BECAME TWO

WHO ARE YOU?

HOW COULD YOU DO WHAT YOU HAVE DONE?

AND WHY WERE YOU ALLOWED TO WITNESS THE EVENT?

BECAUSE YOU ALREADY KNOW PART OF THE TRUTH --

--THAT THE FIRST ARE NOT TRULY THE FIRST GODS

HOW DID YOU KNOW I--?

IT'S ENOUGH THAT I DO KNOW

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT SO MANY THINGS, GANNISH

BUT THERE'S MORE YOU NEED TO DISCOVER

YOU AND YA-A BOTH FEEL THE HOUSES SHOULD BE UNITED AGAIN

LOOK.

...THE SCARS YOU BEAR ARE PROOF OF YOUR BELIEF.

...AND A SIGN OF THE PAIN YOU CARRY.

...KNOWING THERE ARE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS YOU DARE NOT ASK

DOESN'T THE EXISTENCE OF THE SIGIL-BEARERS CONFIRM IT?

THE FIRST ARE NOT ALONE

THERE EXISTS YET ANOTHER POWER, AND PERHAPS

...MORE THAN ONE

"SOMEONE MUST FIND AND SHARE THE TRUTH, GANNISH.

"THE BURDEN FALLS ON YOU.

"...BUT YOU WILL FIND HELP ALONG THE WAY."

WILL GANNISH WELCOME US HERE PERSHA?

I DON'T KNOW

I BARELY KNOW HIM

HE AND MOTHER ONLY TOLERATE EACH OTHER

HE'S NOT HERE

HAVE YOU LOOKED WITH YOUR OTHER SIGHT?

NO. I'M STILL STINGING FROM TOUCHING ORLIM

GANNISH

HMMM. HE'S NOT ANYWHERE NEARBY

PERSHA, WHY DON'T YOU LOOK *ACROSS* THE EIDOLON?

HMMM?

GANNISH

OH THERE YOU ARE!

YOU MUST FIND THE ANSWERS

WHY ME?

OH? WHAT'S THIS?

ENSON!
BECAUSE YOU ARE THE TRUTHSEEKER AMONG YOUR PEOPLE
MY PEOPLE?
ENSON, ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT YOU ARE NOT OF THE FIRST?
NOT THE FIRST? THEN WHAT--?
I AM
I AM NOT
BOTH ARE TRUE
YOU MUST TRUST THAT I WOULD NOT MISGUIDE YOU
.. OR ANYONE WHO BELIEVES THAT THE HOUSES SHOULD BE REUNITED.
PERSHA
HE DID IT AGAIN!
ENSON SAW ME!
BUT NO ONE EVER DOES
I HEARD YOU SAY SO
WYTURF!
THIS IS SERIOUS.
AND NO ONE ELSE DOES!
BUT WHY?
WHY TELL ME THESE TRUTHS
--YOU KNOW I CANNOT HELP BUT KNOW THEIR VERACITY--
--WHY TORTURE ME WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE, ENSON?
ENSON?
On one level, my journey was a success.

...I received answers.
Empty of power, filled with confusion, there was nothing more for me to do...
...than wobble home to think...
...and prepare myself for this coming journey...
...that only I could make.

SO, SEAHN
YOU'RE REALLY CONSIDERING AN ALLIANCE WITH HOUSE SINISTER?
WHO WOULD YOU CONTACT OVER THERE?
I'M JUST CONSIDERING BEING OPEN TO OPPORTUNITY, THAT'S ALL
OUR HOUSE IS GETTING *MIRED* IN ITS OWN TRADITION, VIHAM
HOUSE SINISTER IS MORE ENERGETIC
IF WE HOPE TO EVER CHANGE LIFE FOR US SECUNDAE, WE NEED TO SEEK OUT--
INGRAS HOUSE?
SEAHN BE CAREFUL THAT SIDE'S UNPREDICTABLE
YOU DON'T WANT TO UNLEASH SOMETHING YOU CAN'T CONTROL
WE DO WANT TO STIR THINGS UP, THOUGH, GRACOS--
--THAT'S A SURE WAY TO PUT TROUBLE IN MOTION
WOULDN'T THAT MAKE THINGS *TOO* WILD?
ALTHOUGH THE HOUSES WERE ONE ONCE MAYBE WE SHOULD GET *TOGETHER* AGAIN AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS
Uh, Oh
I'LL SEE YOU THREE LATER
I DON'T WANT TO SIT THROUGH *THIS* AGAIN
RAVACA?
SEAHN!

OH
LOOK
ITS
TRENIN
WHAT IS IT NOW?
FACE ME!
MAKE ME
OH ALL RIGHT
IS THIS FACE ENOUGH?
DON'T MOCK ME, BOY
I KNOW YOU'RE INVOLVED IN VECHEM'S MURDER
I JUST CAN'T PROVE IT
NO, YOU CAN'T PROVE IT, CAN YOU?
NOT YET

MAYBE THAT'S BECAUSE I WASN'T INVOLVED!
IF I DISCOVER OTHERWISE --
BY THE EYES OF ALTWAAL, SEAHN, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN TROUBLE!
MAYBE IF YOU WEREN'T SO EAGER TO HAVE ME BE TROUBLE--!
WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS LIVE UP TO YOUR
FATHER?
MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT TWICE BEFORE BEGETTING ME
YOU ANNOYING LITTLE SECOND BORN!
YOU'RE NO CHILD OF MINE.

I'M NO CHILD OF ANYONE'S, AM I?
AT LEAST NO ONE WHO WILL CLAIM ME!
TAKE YOUR SUSPICIONS AND *CHOKE* ON THEM, TRENIN
THERE'S NO MURDERER HERE
RISE.
JUST A MAN *OBSESSED* WITH RETRIBUTION
NO MATTER WHAT THE COST
TRENIN'S YOUR FATHER?
I'D ALWAYS WONDERED IF THAT RUMOR WAS TRUE
HE'S NEVER TOLD ANYONE IF IT'S TRUE OR NOT
AND I DON'T THINK IT *IS*, RAVACA
BUT IT ALWAYS *GETS* HIM, SO I USE IT

TROUBLESOME BRAT
I SHOULD HAVE LEFT HIM
WHY DOES HE BOTHER YOU SO?
ENSON?
WEREN'T YOU...?
I SUPPOSE NOT
SEAHN
BOTHERS ME BECAUSE I FEEL SOMEWHAT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HE IS.
WHAT HE IS IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT SEAHN
I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT SEAHN BECAUSE YOU'RE KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON HIM
I PROMISE YOU ALL WILL BE AS IT SHOULD BE
THEN COUNSEL HIM WELL, ENSON, OR YOU'LL BOTH ANSWER TO ME.
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN TRENIN
I'LL HAVE NEED OF YOU

TRY AGAIN!

BRACE YOURSELF THIS TIME!

STOP FIGHTING THE BLOW!

ACCEPT IT, RECOVER THEN *COUNTER!*

WHUNNF

LET'S TRY THAT ONE MORE TIME

GREETINGS, PYREM

AND TO YOU YA-A

YOU CALLED?

HOLD THIS!

WHUMP

PYREM I'VE BEEN WATCHING TRENIN WITH THAT SIGIL BEARER HE'S ADOPTED HE'S BECOMING A LITTLE TOO SYMPATHETIC

IS IT WISE TO ALLOW HIM TO CONTINUE MONITORING THE MORTAL?

FROM WHAT THE HE'S SAID IT MAY BE THAT TRENIN SEES SOMETHING OF HIMSELF IN THE MAN

BUT HE WOULD NEVER LET ANY SYMPATHY LEAD HIM TO BETRAY HIS HOUSE

HOW INTERESTING

TRENIN

WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT YOU

SEAHN AGAIN?

YES

I *KNOW* THE BOY'S INVOLVED IN VECHEM'S MURDER, PYREM

BUT WITHOUT PROOF I'LL DO NOTHING BUT WATCH THE LITTLE...

STOP GROUSING TRENIN

YOU COULD HAVE MADE A *DIFFERENT* DECISION LONG AGO.

YOU HELPED CREATE THIS PROBLEM

ALTHOUGH I COULD WHIP HIM INTO SHAPE

THAT'S NOT THE SHAPE HE'D WANT, I'M SURE

IT *WOULD* KEEP HIM OUT OF TROUBLE PERMANENTLY

HE'D SURVIVE

YOU TWO PUT YOUR MINDS TOGETHER

I'VE GOT *BODIES* TO TRAIN

ORIUM!
MY PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN--
--ANSWER ME, OLD FOOL!
DID THAT CONNECTION COME SOLELY FROM ENSON OR DID YOU ASSIST IN SOME WAY?
MY EYES, MY SPHERE, MY HEARING WERE NUMB TO THIS PHENOMENON YOUR MIND WITNESSED, INCRA
DOES IT TASTE, PERHAPS, OF THE SHRIEKING TANG OF GUILT?
SILENCE!
HOW COULD YOU NOT HAVE SEEN?
I SEE...
I SEE NOTHING BUT CONFUSION, I SMELL THE PURPLED FRENZY OF WONDER
I WONDER
IS THE NEW LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER SUBJECT TO THE MADNESS THAT AFFLICTS THE OLD?

STOP IT!
I AM NOT YOU, BLIND FOOL, AND I AM NOT MISTAKEN!
ENSON OF DEXTER MADE CONTACT WITH ME THROUGH YOUR SCRYING SPHERE
IF YOU HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT
THEN I MUST KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS ENSON
I MUST BRING HIM TO ME
DANGEROUS, GIVEN HIS DISTURBING CONNECTION BUT I MUST
NO, NOT DIRECTLY!
HE'S ALWAYS IN THE COMPANY OF SEAHN, WHOSE OVERTOWERING EGO WILL MAKE HIM EASILY MANIPULABLE
THAT'S IT--I'LL GET TO ENSON THROUGH CHARMING HIS ALLY...
AND ADDING ONE MORE TO MY OWN COLLECTION
SOON, CONQUERING HOUSE DEXTER WILL BE A MATTER OF SIMPLY GIVING A COMMAND
COME OUT, OR UM
THERE'S ONE OTHER PLAYER I WANT BACK IN PLACE
THE TWIN?

Oh, NO
I'M THINKING OF AN OLDER ACQUAINTANCE
CONTACT BRAAG FOR ME
BRAAG?

Barbara Kesel
WRITER
Bart Sears
PENCILER
Andy Smith
INKER
Michael Atiyeh
COLORIST
Dave Lanphear
with Troy Peteri
LETTERERS
The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
Michael A. Beattie
Chief Financial Officer
Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
James Breithell
Director of
Marketing & Distribution
Ian M. Feiler
Manager Media Relations
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Brandon Peterson
Art Director
Pam Davies
Production
Director
Sylvia Bretz
Production
Assistant
Dave Lanphear
Design Director
Troy Peteri
Design Assistant
Michelle Pugliese
Freelance Coordinator

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IN THE BEGINNING...

Unease spreads: mystery haunts both Houses. In search of answers, Gannish has crossed the Eidolon to meet with Enson (who gives him a quest instead), a meeting witnessed by Persha and Pyrem. Seahn is accused of murder by Trenin, Yala worries about Trenin's close observation of a Sigil-Bearer, and Ingra extends an invitation to Braag...

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I HAD YOU ALL SUMMONED HERE BECAUSE I WANT TO OFFER YOU A CHOICE
INGRA YOUR PLACE HAS *GROWN* SINCE I LAST STEPPED INSIDE
MUST BE THE COMPANY YOU KEEP
SUCKING THE COUNCIL DRY TO BOOST YOUR GLORY
USING THEM
USING *ME*

THE RECENT TROUBLING REVELATION OF THESE MORTALS WHO POSSESS POWER AKIN TO OURS *CANNOT* BE ALLOWED TO THREATEN US I'VE DONE WHAT I CAN TO KEEP THEM UNDER MY OBSERVATION, BUT THE TIME HAS COME TO TAKE A FRESH STEP
A *UNITED* FRONT AMONG *ALL* FIRST COULD WITHSTAND *ANY* THREAT
I MUST REUNITE ELYSIA
SO *SHE* CALLED AND I'M HERE
GO IN?
DON'T GO IN?
AS IF I DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER
I'LL NEVER LEARN
WELL NOW
THIS IS *TWISTED*

IT WILL TAKE A *STRONG* LEADER TO UNITE US.
PYREM OF DEXTER IS TOO HAMPERED BY HIS EMOTIONS TO RULE A REJOINED ELYSIA. I HAVE BEEN CONTENT TO ALLOW OUR SEPARATION TO CONTINUE
BUT NO MORE
COULDN'T SHE AT LEAST HAVE GOTTEN ME *RIGHT*?
IT'S A TRIBUTE
IT'S A *JOKE*
PLAYED ON ME
WOULDN'T BE THE WORST SHE'S DONE
STILL I'M *HERE*
WHAT DOES *THAT* SAY ABOUT ME INGRA?

YOU HAVE ALL SIDED WITH ME IN THE PAST.
SHOW ME THAT SAME DEVOTION NOW
ALL THOSE WHO WILLINGLY PROVIDE THAT WHICH I NEED WILL GAIN FAVOR IN MY EYES
CONSIDER THIS CAREFULLY
BRAAG, MY LOVE
I'M SO GLAD YOU ACCEPTED MY INVITATION AS YOU CAN SEE
YOU'RE NEVER FAR FROM MY THOUGHTS
IT'S BEEN SO LONG TOO LONG
LONG ENOUGH THAT YOU CAN'T REMEMBER ME CLEARLY--
--SICK LITTLE SHOW OUT THERE, ALL THOSE LIMP-BODIED SURROGATES
JUST A SIDE EFFECT OF A WANDERING IMAGINATION
THAT DRIFTED BACK TO YOU
COME
LET'S TALK

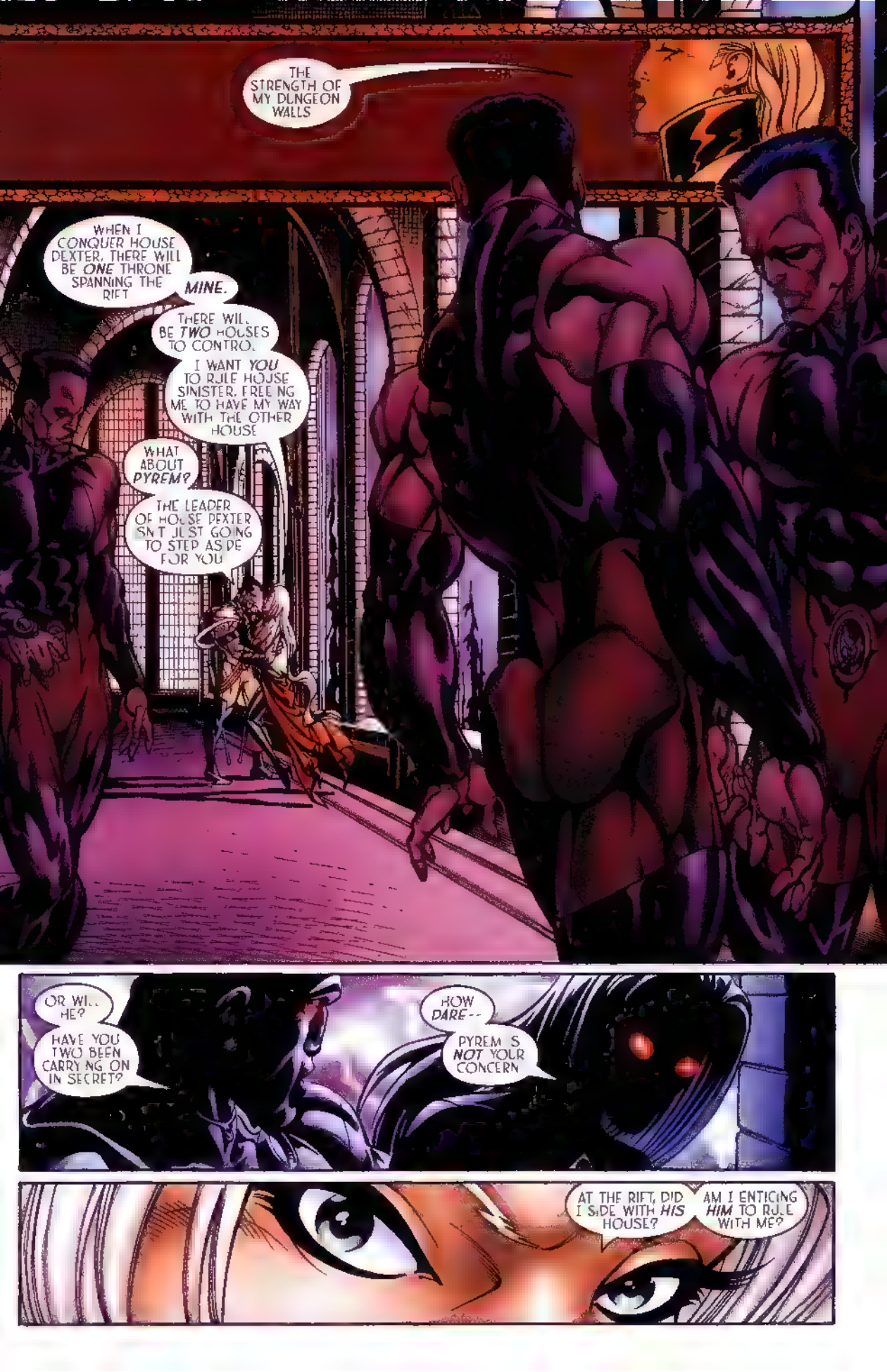
TALK ABOUT YOUR INTERESTING REVELATIONS
INGRA WANTS TO MEET WITH ME
PRIVATELY
SHOCKING, I KNOW BUT IT APPEARS THE HOUSE SINISTER LEADER'S EYE HAS STRAYED TO THE OTHER SIDE
NOT THAT I'M SURPRISED.
ALL WOMEN LOVE ME
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
SHHHH DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT ME AND INGRA
IT'S A SECRET
ONE I DON'T THINK I'LL SHARE WITH ENSON
I KNOW, I KNOW BUT ENSON ALWAYS KNOWS YOUR SECRETS
NOT THIS ONE
I'LL KEEP IT TO MYSELF
IN FACT--
--I WANT IT TO BE SOMETHING EVEN YOU DON'T KNOW
FORGET.
gyaaaaugh
FORGOT TOO MUCH?
THAT'S ALL RIGHT--
--YOUR MIND WAS NEVER YOUR MOST ATTRACTIVE FEATURE

WE ARE ALL TAUGHT TO PLACE ONE'S SELF BEFORE ALL--TO SERVE ME NOW IS TO SAVE YOURSELF
THOSE WHO CROSS ME OR WITHHOLD HELP FROM ME WOULD BE WISE TO REMEMBER THE VOLUME OF MY ANGER
BRAAG
THE TIME HAS COME
I NEED YOU
ME?
YEAH, RIGHT
I'VE HEARD THOSE WORDS BEFORE
I'M NOT AS GULLIBLE AS I USED TO BE
REMEMBER WHEN I THOUGHT IT WAS OUR CHILD?
YOU LEAVE PERSHA OUT OF THIS!
HE'LL BE HERE!

GANNISH WILL COME HOME, WYTURE
WE JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT
SOMETHING I KNOW DOESN'T COME EASILY FOR EITHER OF US
BUT WE MUST LEARN TO BE MORE THAN WE ARE
GANNISH!
PERSHA?
WYTURE?
WHY...
PLEASE GANNISH!
I NEED YOUR ADVICE!
IT'S ABOUT ALT-
HNNH!
IF THE RIFT--

YOU, YALA<
THE SIGN!
NGGN!
I CAN'T SAY IT!
CONSTRAINED AGAINST SPEAKING TO SUBJECT EH?
YOUR MOTHER MUST HAVE BEEN VERY ANGRY
WYTURE, WOULD YOU PLEASE HELP?
WHEN WE OBSERVED THE SIGIL-BEARER HUNT
--PERSHA NOTICED THAT HER SIGIL WAS THE TWO HOUSES SYMBOLS COMBINED
SHE'S OUT TO PROVE THAT THE HOUSES MUST COME TOGETHER AGAIN
-WITH ALTWAAL AS THEIR LEADER
BUT ALTWAAL'S DEAD
AND YET
THERE'S TRUTH TO YOUR WORDS
WHICH YOU KNEW WITHOUT MAKING ME STRUGGLE THROUGH THEM!
SUCH FIRE
YOU ARE YOUR MOTHER'S DAUGHTER
CAREFUL WHERE YOUR PASSION LEADS YOU, PERSHA
THERE ARE FORCES GREATER THAN US IN MOTION

ONES WHICH WON'T WELCOME YOUR MEDDLING
BUT I KNOW I'M ON THE RIGHT PATH
I CAN FEEL IT
BECAUSE I'M ALSO MY FATHER'S DAUGHTER
YOU KNOW?
PERSHA
I'D LIKE TO TALK FURTHER
INSIDE?
YOU TWO GO
I'LL BE CROWDED WITH ME IN THERE
WHAT?
BUT, WYTURE - I NEED YOU TO SPEAK FOR ME!
HOW CAN I
FIND THE WILL, PERSHA
YOU ALREADY KNOW THE WAY


THE STRENGTH OF MY DUNGEON WALLS
WHEN I CONQUER HOUSE DEXTER, THERE WILL BE ONE THRONE SPANNING THE RIFT
MINE.
THERE WILL BE TWO HOUSES TO CONTROL.
I WANT YOU TO RULE HOUSE SINISTER, FREEING ME TO HAVE MY WAY WITH THE OTHER HOUSE
WHAT ABOUT PYREM?
THE LEADER OF HOUSE DEXTER ISN'T JUST GOING TO STEP ASIDE FOR YOU
OR WILL HE?
HAVE YOU TWO BEEN CARRYING ON IN SECRET?
HOW DARE--
PYREM IS NOT YOUR CONCERN
AT THE RIFT, DID I SIDE WITH HIS HOUSE?
AM I ENTICING HIM TO RULE WITH ME?

PYREM IS *MINE* TO WORRY ABOUT, NOT YOURS.
PYREM? I'M HERE
YES, I FELT YOU ARRIVE
I'M IN THE HALL OF WORLDS. PLEASE JOIN ME
THANK YOU FOR COMING TO SEE ME
I APPRECIATE YOUR INDULGENCE
ENSON

YOU SEEM TROUBLED, PYREM .. IS THAT WHY YOU CALLED ME HERE?

WALK WITH ME ENSON

I WAS AT THE TOWER YESTERDAY, ENSON, JUST TH NKING

WATCHING

AND I NOTICED A STRANGE CONVERSATION

I DON T WANT TO INTRUDE ON YOUR PRIVACY, BUT AS LEADER I MUST ASK

WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS WITH GANNISH OF SINISTER?

I WAS PROVOKING CURIOSITY

HIS, NOW YOURS

CONVERGENCE IS UPON YOU, PYREM

YOUR PAST AND YOUR FUTURE ARE COMING TOGETHER IN ONE.

THE LEADER HAS COME

LEADER

I SENSE YOU DON T MEAN ME

WE BOTH KNOW YOU'RE NOT THE TRUE LEADER

YOU MEAN *ALTWAAL*

BUT HE'S GONE

IS HE?

YOU AND INGRA SHARE WHAT WAS ONE MAN'S TASK

NOW ONE LEADER WILL UNITE YOU AGAIN IN BOTH WAYS

YOU DON'T WANT TO LEAD, YOU JUST FEEL THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SO

YOU WON'T HAVE TO CARRY THE BURDEN FOREVER, PYREM

THE LEADER IS ALREADY AMONG YOU, ALTHOUGH LEAST LIKELY

TRIALS WILL FORGE STRENGTH AND GROWTH

WHO?

LEAST L KELY?

YOU CAN T MEAN SEAHNG

TO TELL WOULD BE TO CONTROL

TRUST ME

YOU RE A MYSTERY ENSON

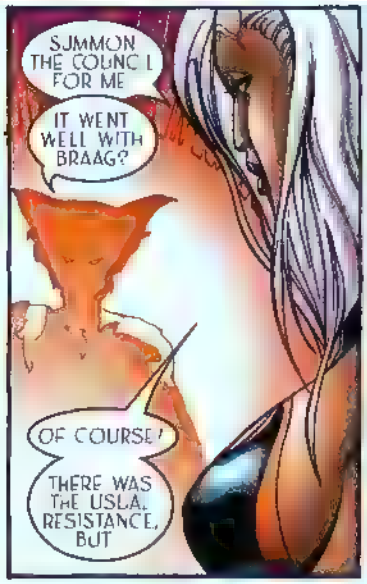
HOW CAN ANYONE TRUST YOU?

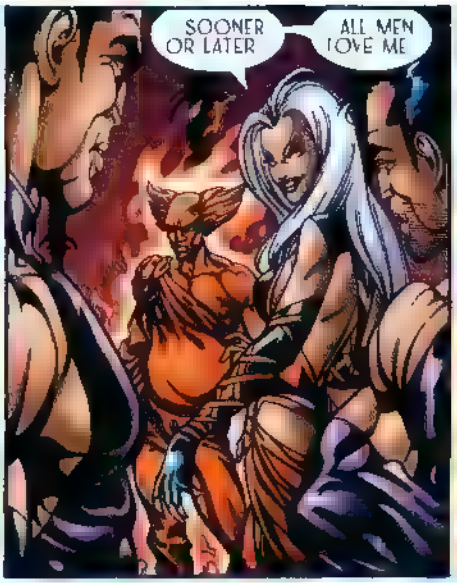
AND THE FEROCITY OF MY DISAPPOINTMENT
TRUST ME
I WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN FOR US
I'M NOT STUPID I SEE WHAT'S COMING YOU'VE GOT ME GOING DOWN THE SAME ROAD TO THE SAME PAIN I STILL HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN
TRUST YOU?
DAMN YOU, INGRA
YOU KNOW I WILL
YOU MAY BE A DECEITFUL TEASE, BUT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN JUST ANOTHER OF YOUR WILLING SLAVES
THERE IS ONE MINOR NUISANCE I'M NOT WILLING TO TOLERATE A MINUTE LONGER

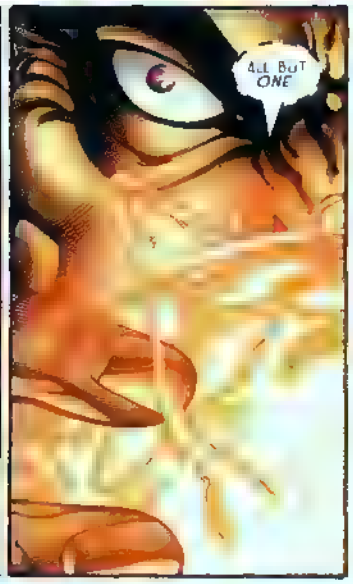
I AM THE STRONGEST OF OUR HOUSE THIS IS NOT A BOAST, BUT PURE FACT
YOU HAVE ALL FELT THE STING OF MY POWER
KEEP IN MIND THE ANGER THAT FUELS ME
THIS.
I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK, INGRA—
- BECAUSE I KNOW YOU'LL DELIVER ON YOUR PROMISE OF POWER
--I JUST HOPE I STILL WANT IT WHEN IT'S MINE
BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE MY FACE ANYWHERE BUT ON MY OWN BODY AGAIN
EVER

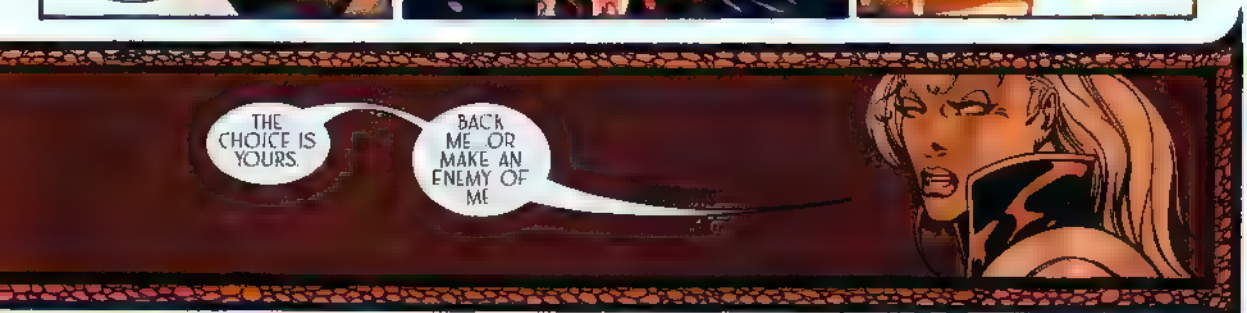
YOU ALL OWE ME
I'M COLLECTING BUT A SMALL FRACTION OF THAT DEBT
IF YOU FAIL ME NOW
I WILL REMEMBER
OR I'LL DO WORSE THAN FIX YOUR TOYS
HMM
GOODBYE, NGRA
ASSUMING YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS
I EXPECT YOU'LL SUMMON ME WHEN YOU'RE READY TO BEGIN
I'LL BE WAITING

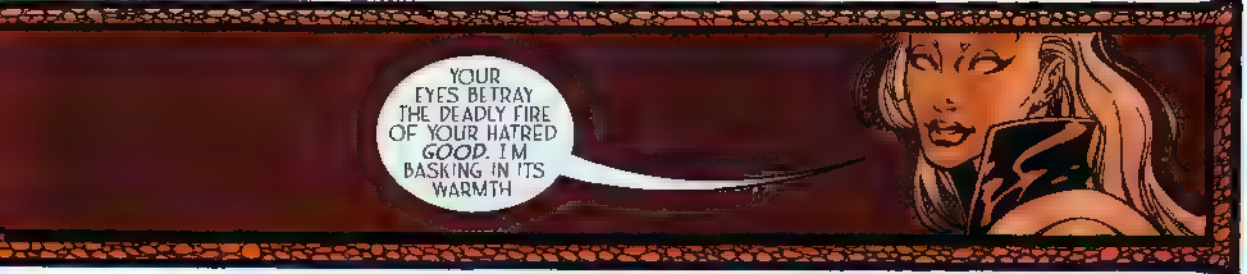
I'LL DO WHATEVER I WANT WITH YOUR FACE BRAAG
I LIKE YOUR FACE
I INTEND TO HANG IT ON MY WALL SOMEDAY
ORIUM

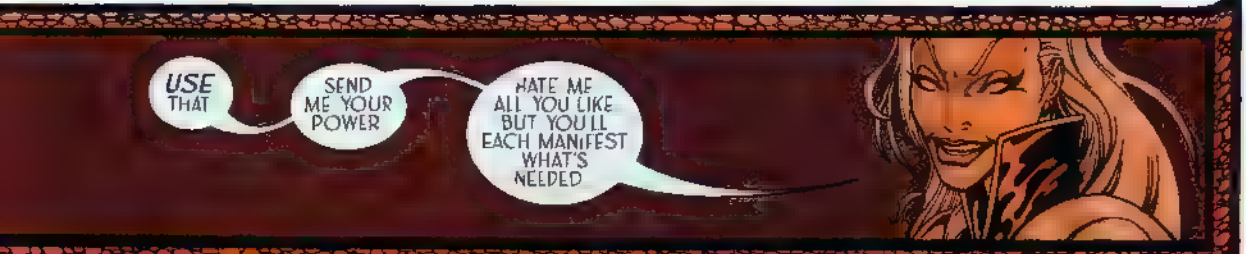

SUMMON THE COUNCIL FOR ME
IT WENT WELL WITH BRAAG?
OF COURSE!
THERE WAS THE USLA. RESISTANCE, BUT


SOONER OR LATER
ALL MEN LOVE ME


ALL BUT ONE


THE CHOICE IS YOURS.
BACK ME OR MAKE AN ENEMY OF ME


YOUR EYES BETRAY THE DEADLY FIRE OF YOUR HATRED GOOD. I'M BASKING IN ITS WARMTH


USE THAT
SEND ME YOUR POWER
HATE ME ALL YOU LIKE BUT YOU'LL EACH MANIFEST WHAT'S NEEDED

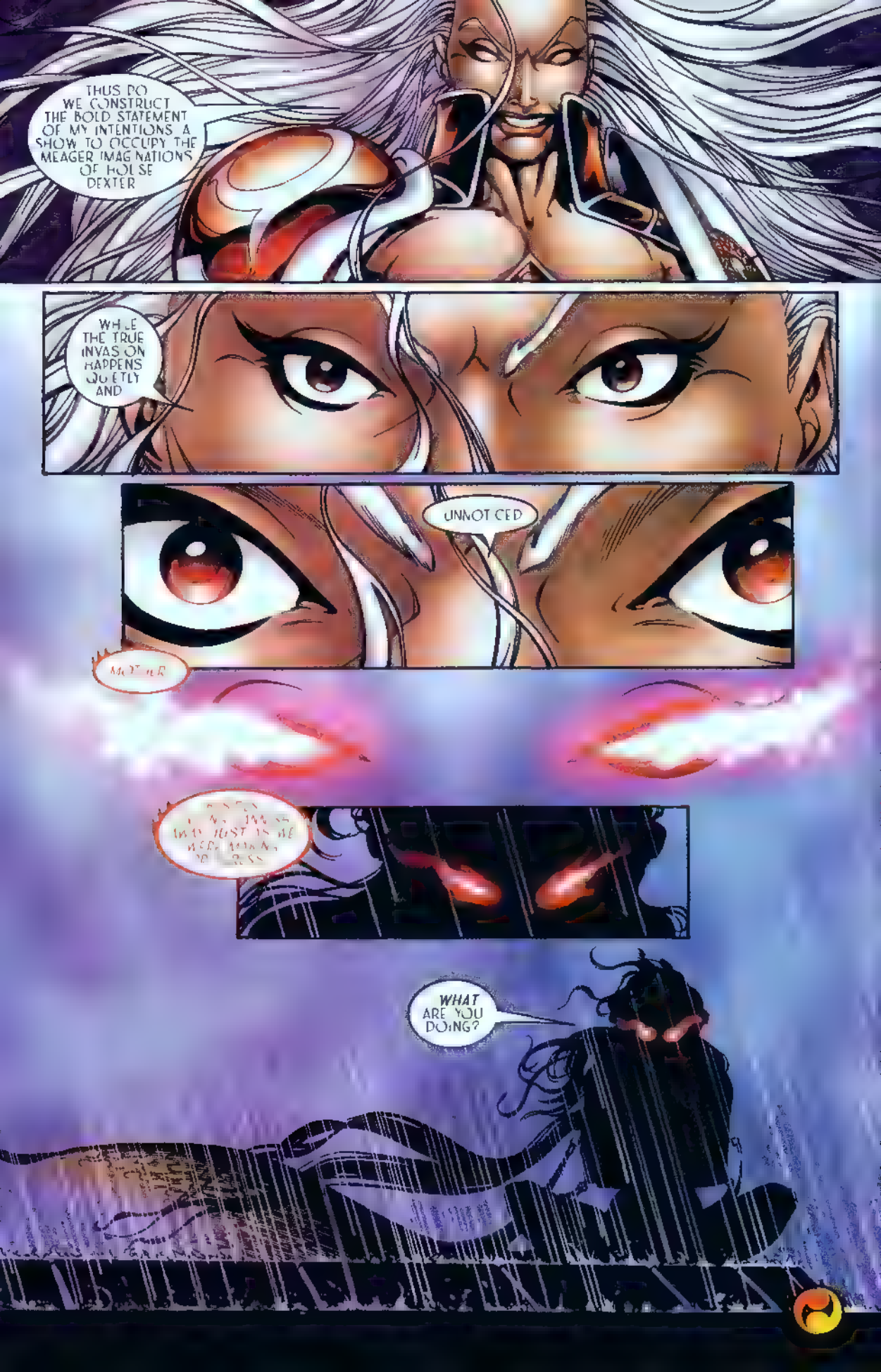
BECAUSE YOU REALLY HAVE NO CHOICE

WYEHOLD ERVJ.SH MINTY MAGN MHARRUT CAHESSE IMMOTUS, GHIRRETUR SVENESS GANNISH

HIGH COUNCIL OF SINISTER BY YOUR NAMES I BIND YOU, BY YOUR DEBTS I COMMAND YOU

REACH OUT EACH TO HIS OWN TO CALL FORTH THE PRIMAL FIRE

AND DELIVER IT TO ME


THUS DO WE CONSTRUCT THE BOLD STATEMENT OF MY INTENTIONS A SHOW TO OCCUPY THE MEAGER IMAGINATIONS OF HOUSE DEXTER
WHILE THE TRUE INVASION HAPPENS QUIETLY AND
UNNOTICED
MOTHER
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Barbara Kesel
WRITER
Bart Sears
PENCILER
Andy Smith
INKER
Michael Atiyeh
COLORIST
Dave Lanphear
with Troy Peteri
LETTERERS
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
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James Breitbell
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Head Writer
Brandon Peterson
Art Director
Bart Sears
Assistant Art Director
Pam Davies
Production Director
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Production Assistant
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IN THE BEGINNING...
INGRA
the SEETHING BEAUTY
PYREM
the DIPLOMAT
ORIUM
the ORACLE
TRENIN
the HUNTER
GANNISH
the SUFFERER
YALA
the WARRIOR WOMAN
PERSHA
SEAHN
He cares only for himself ..
Ingra has come to a conclusion - she is ready to announce to the ten members of her High Council. Braag's fallen back under her spell, Seahn's accepted an invitation to a private meeting, and the Sinister High Council is giving her their power. Persha is also pushing for reunification, but under Altwaal, an idea Gannish recognizes as truth. Pyrem and Enson discuss Altwaal, too, but Enson alludes to a new Leader...

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I AM NOT TOO PROUD TO ACCEPT THAT I HAVE HELD TOO TIGHTLY TO A NOTION GONE COLD
YES, I HAVE SPOKEN OUT *AGAINST* ANY SUGGESTION OF REUNIFICATION
BUT LATELY I SEE SIGNS AND PORTENTS OF ITS NECESSITY
"IT SEEMS IT IS *TIME*
HOUSE SINISTER AND HOUSE DEXTER MUST AGAIN BECOME ONE *ELYSIA*.
SINCE THE JOINING SEEMS INEVITABLE THEN THE ONE WHO TAKES THE INITIATIVE TO BRING THE TWO SIDES TOGETHER
SANNISH"

WILL BE THE ONE TO LEAD THE REJOINED CITY OF ALL FIRST
WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU, GHIRRETUR?
DID YOU GET WHAT YOU WANTED, INGRA?
YOU'VE RUN US ALL DOWN LIKE BEASTS BEFORE THE SLAUGHTER
--FINISH US, IF THAT'S YOUR GOAL!
I DIDN'T TAKE THE LEADER'S ROLE AND LOSE MY WILES, MY DEAR
NONE OF YOU'S MORE THAN TEMPORARILY INCONVENIENCED
IT'S NOT YOUR OWN POWER YOU'VE MANIFESTED HERE BUT THAT OF YOUR MINIONS
LEAVING ME BUT A SMALL SPELL OF SHAPING
TO BIND IT ALL TO MY NAME AND NATURE...
MY HOME.
NO MORE!
YALA
GANNISH?
YOUR INSOLENCE IS GROWING SEER OF TRUTHS

SOON I WI... GROW WEARY OF TOLERATING YOUR DISRESPECT

THRUMMMM

SKRAEEENCH

KRATHOOOOM

KKRRRSSH

WRAAATHOOM

I DON'T THINK I LIKE THIS.

HELLO, MY LOVE
THERE YOU ARE!
YOUR COACHMEN WERE SO SILENT AND THEN --!
WHAT IS THIS MONSTROSITY?
NGRA'S SHOWING OFF AND USING ALL OF US ON HER COUNCIL TO DO IT
CAN'T THE TEN OF YOU RESIST HER?
POSSIBLY
BUT THE COST WOULD BE GREATER THAN THE TRIBUTE SHE DEMANDS
HOME
SAFE
OOOOHH
AS I ALWAYS AM IN YOUR ARMS
CROSSING THE EIDOLON LEFT ME SO WEAK I DIDN'T KNOW IF I COULD GET MYSELF HOME IF I HAD TO
I WAS ALMOST CONVINCED SHE'D SEEN ME HERE AT YOUR HOME AND WAS TRYING TO PUNISH --
BY ALTWAAL'S EYES --!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I NEEDED TO SPEAK WITH GANNISH BUT SINCE YOU'VE COME, YA. I CAN ALSO ASK YOU
I WON'T BE ABLE TO SAY ALL OF IT, BUT IT CONCERNS ALTWAAL AND WHY HE
ALTWAAL!
I CAN SAY HIS NAME!
IT'S GONE! THE CONSTRICTION IS GONE!
WYTURE. ?
ANOTHER LIKE ENSON?
YOU THINK WYTURE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS? THAT'S REALLY NOT LIKELY
MOTHER PLACED THAT CONSTRICTION ON ME. WYTURE'S NO ADEPT -- SHE'S TOO FLIGHTY FOR THAT
BUT YOU'RE A TRUTHSEER SO THERE MUST BE SOME CONNECTION
HOW STRANGE
PERSHA
WHY ARE YOU HERE

ANSWER ME!
PERSHA BELIEVES THAT ALTWAAL S GO NG TO RETURN TO UNITE THE HOUSES
AND I SEE TRUTH IN HER CONVICTION
YOU KNOW I CAN T ESCAPE THE TRUTH
THEN ALTWAAL IS ALIVE?
IN SOME GUISE YES
PERHAPS WE ARE BEING TESTED --
-- MAYBE HE CREATED THE ONES WHO BEAR THE MARK OF BOTH HOUSES!
THEY MIGHT BE MEANT TO POINT US TOWARD COM NG TOGETHER AGAIN!
ALTWAAL S W SDOM IS SO VAST --
WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF ALTWAAL S WISDOM?
YOU WEREN T EVEN BORN UNTIL AFTER --
YALA
SURELY WE ARE PROOF THAT THE HOUSES ARE STRONGEST IOINED?
ISN T OUR LOVE STRONGER THAN THE RIFT THAT DIVIDES US?
AND PERSHAS IS NOT THE ONLY VOICE TELLING ME THIS MESSAGE
I WENT TO SEE ENSON OF DEXTER WHO SPEAKS WITH AN ORACLE S CONV CTION OF A FORCE GREATER THAN THE FIRST
I MUST GO NOW TO FOLLOW THIS TRAIL LAID BY BOTH TRUTHS IN SEARCH OF GREATER ANSWERS
GANNISH, YOU CROSSED THE RIFT?

YES.
FOR THE FIRST OF MANY TIMES TO COME
I'LL BE GONE ONLY A SHORT TIME AND RETURN WITH A MYSTERY'S UNRAVELING TO SHARE
I WANT TO BELIEVE YOU ABOUT THE CROSSING.
AND ALTWAA.
BUT-
GOODBYE, MY LOVE
GANNISH!
WAIT!
GANNISH
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, PERSHA! WHAT KIND OF FOOL'S QUEST HAVE YOU BEGUN?
HOW HAVE YOU TRICKED MY LOVE INTO RACING OFF IN ITS SERVICE?
HE'S NOT A FOOL, YALA
I ONLY KNOW A LITTLE OF WHAT ENSON REVEALED TO HIM --
JUST THAT MUCH WAS DISCONCERTING
BUT HE WON'T BE ALONE I HAVE A WAY TO MONITOR HIM ANYWHERE HE GOES I CAN LET YOU KNOW WHAT HE --
NO!

YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE!

YALA PLEASE LISTEN
YOU MISBEGOTTEN DEMON!
HAVE YOU BEWITCHED GANNISH THE WAY YOUR MOTHER DID PYREM?
I WON'T LET YOU THREATEN MY LOVE OR MY HOUSE!

I'M NOT THE THREAT, YALA.
DIVIDED, WE ARE THREATENED TOGETHER WE HAVE STRENGTH
HOW DO I KNOW THAT?
HOW CAN I TRUST SOMEONE I CAN'T FIGHT?
COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND FACE ME!
AND LET YOU HAVE MY HEAD?
I MAY BE ONLY A LOWLY SECUNDAE IN YOUR FIRST-BORN EYES.
BUT I'M NOT STUPID
NO, YOU'RE JUST TOO SMART FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT ALTWAAL, BUT YOU'RE TEARING OPEN OLD WOUNDS BETTER LEFT HEALED!
YOUR INDULGING YOUR CURIOSITY THIS WAY WILL ONLY LEAD US BACK TO WAR!
DON'T TURN HIM FROM ME, PERSHA. DON'T MAKE ME FACE HIM ACROSS A BATTLEFIELD
DON'T MAKE ME CHOOSE BETWEEN LOVE AND LOYALTY
YALA, IF I CAN INSPIRE UNDERSTANDING, THERE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE WAR TO REUNITE US
AND MY MOTHER LOVED PYREM

MOTHER?

WASN'T OUR HOME ALREADY LARGE ENOUGH?

I ASSUME YOU'RE BEHIND THIS RENOVATION TAKING PLACE

THOOOM

THOOOM

THOOOM

ACTUALLY PERSHA

YOU ARE

IT'S A SMALL SHOW OF INTENT TOWARD A GOAL INSPIRED BY SOMETHING YOU SAID

YOU ASKED ME WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF

NOTHING, I REALIZED

BUT DON'T WORRY YOURSELF ABOUT IT

WE'LL SPEAK LATER

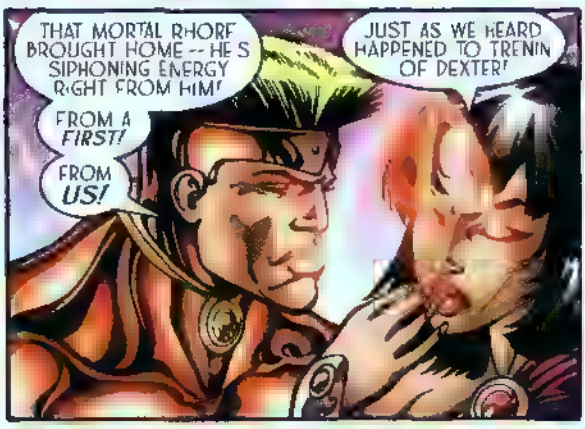
RIGHT NOW

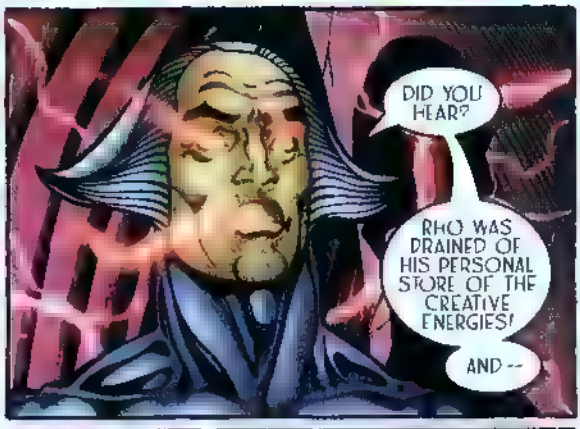
I HAVE A *PRIVATE* ERRAND TO ATTEND TO
HELLO SEAHN
THANK YOU FOR RESPECTING MY NEED FOR DISCRETION
BUT I *HAD* TO SEE YOU
I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU
SO I'VE HEARD
I'M CURIOUS TO KNOW WHAT BROUGHT ME TO YOUR ATTENTION

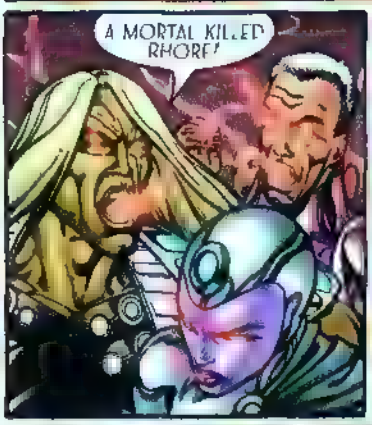
SN T IT OBVIOUS?
YOUR MANY ATTRACTIVE QUALITIES
I ADM RE YOUR OUTSPOKEN NATURE YOUR BRASH DEFIANCE OF TRAD TION YOUR ABI TY TO STAND UP TO PYREM AND SHOUT FOR CHANGE
I ADMIRE MEN WHO KNOW THE R OWN MINDS
I WANT TO KEEP THEM CLOSE TO ME
I MIGHT EVEN HAVE A SPECIAL POSITION IN M ND FOR THEM
POLITICAL, I ASSUME
AREN T YOU AFRA D TO CONSORT WITH A MEMBER OF THE ENEMY HOUSE?
I M AFRAID OF NOTHING
AND SOON ALL FORMER ENEM ES WILL BE M NE
CAN'T YOU SEE YOURSELF LEADING HOUSE DEXTER?
Oh, I FIND THAT VERY TEMPTING TO VISUALIZE
IS THAT YOUR DESIRE INGRA?
AMONG OTHERS PATIENCE WILL REWARD THEM ALL
PROMISE ME, SEAHN
THAT I CAN COUNT ON YOU TO KEEP THIS OUR SECRET FOR NOW
ANYTH NG YOU SAY INGRA
I M ALL YOURS

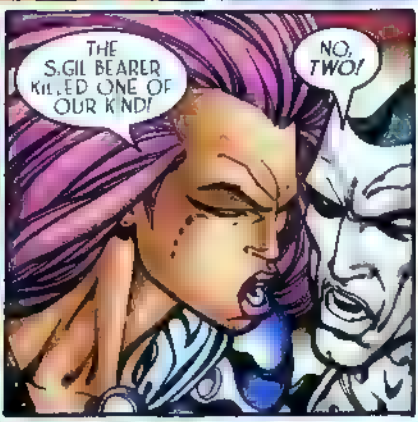
NOW THAT I SEE WHAT ELYSIA IS LIKE, I SEE WHY YOU ARE SO DISINCLINED TO SHARE IT WITH OTHERS RHO RHUSTANE
NOT ALL ARE AS GRATING IN THEIR INSISTENCE TO VISIT MINISTER OF CADADOR
DOES MY HOME MEET WITH YOUR APPROVAL?
HNH
IGNORING THIS CACOPHONY YOU TRY TO PASS OFF AS BUSINESS
YES
THERE'S A RICHNESS TO THE VERY AIR --
-- A PALATABLE AURA OF RAW POWER!
THE FORCES OF CREATION COME FROM ELYSIA
WITH THOSE ENERGIES WE BUILD WORLDS AND SHAPE MIRACLES
WE ARE GODS, ILAHN, NOT MORTALS
GODS
NOT MORTALS.
AND YET

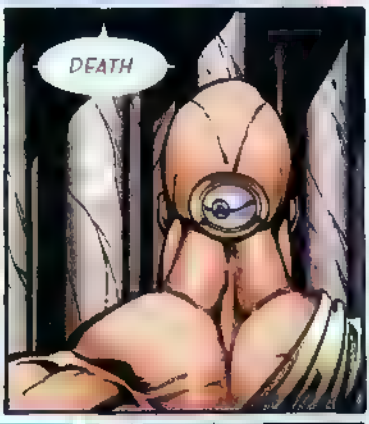
YOU ARE FUELING ME
RHAAAGH!


THAT MORTAL RHORE BROUGHT HOME -- HE'S SIPHONING ENERGY RIGHT FROM HIM!
FROM A FIRST!
FROM US!
JUST AS WE HEARD HAPPENED TO TRENIN OF DEXTER!


DID YOU HEAR?
RHO WAS DRAINED OF HIS PERSONAL STORE OF THE CREATIVE ENERGIES!
AND --


A MORTAL KILLED RHORE!


THE SIGIL BEARER KILLED ONE OF OUR KIND!
NO, TWO!


DEATH

--LEAVING DEATH IN HIS WAKE!

ONE!
TWO!
TEN!
HUNDREDS!
ALL BY ONE MAN!

HOW MANY MORE LIE DEAD AT HIS HANDS?

KILLING US ALL, I TELL YOU!

RUN!

THE ENERGY HERE

LIMITLESS POWER

THIS IS GLORIOUS!

AND NO HAND MOVES TO BAR ME

THE GODS THEMSELVES SCATTER FROM MY PRESENCE!

AH! ONE MOUNTS A SUITABLE OFFENSE

OF A FITTING INTENSITY

EASILY TURNED TO DESTRUCTION BY THE FORCE OF MY INDOMITABLE WILL!
I AM ILAHN OF CADADOR!
NOTHING CAN STOP ME!
YET I CAN HALT GODS!
NO
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?
THIS LOSS OF CONTROL IS
UNACCEPTABLE

THIS ENERGY MORE POTENT THAN DRINK
THIS MADNESS
WILL NOT CONQUER ME
DO WE HAVE ANY IDEA WHO THIS STRANGER IS?

I HAVE NO CLUE AS TO IDENTITY, TRENIN, BUT I SENSE A WORLD THAT HAS SURVIVED ITS OWN DESTRUCTION
I SEE THE TRAIL PYREM SHOULD I INTERFERE?
I'M LESS CONCERNED WITH THE STRANGER THAN WITH THE TRANSFORMATION OF INGRAS ESTATE
SHE'S UP TO SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST THIS CHILDISH DISPLAY, BUT EVEN SO
HER PALACE'S CANCEROUS GROWTH THREATENS ALTWAAL'S OBELISK
SHOULD SHE VIOLATE ITS PERIMETER
THERE COULD BE
UNFORTUNATE RESULTS
WHY?
IT'S JUST A MONUMENT TO REMIND US OF HIS SACRIFICE
OR *IS* IT?
PYREM
IS IT MORE?

Barbara Kesel
WRITER
Bart Sears
PENCILER
Andy Smith
INKER
Michael Atiyeh
COLORIST
Dave Lanphear
with Troy Peteri
LETTERERS
The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
Michael A. Beattie
Chief Financial Officer
Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
James Breitbeil
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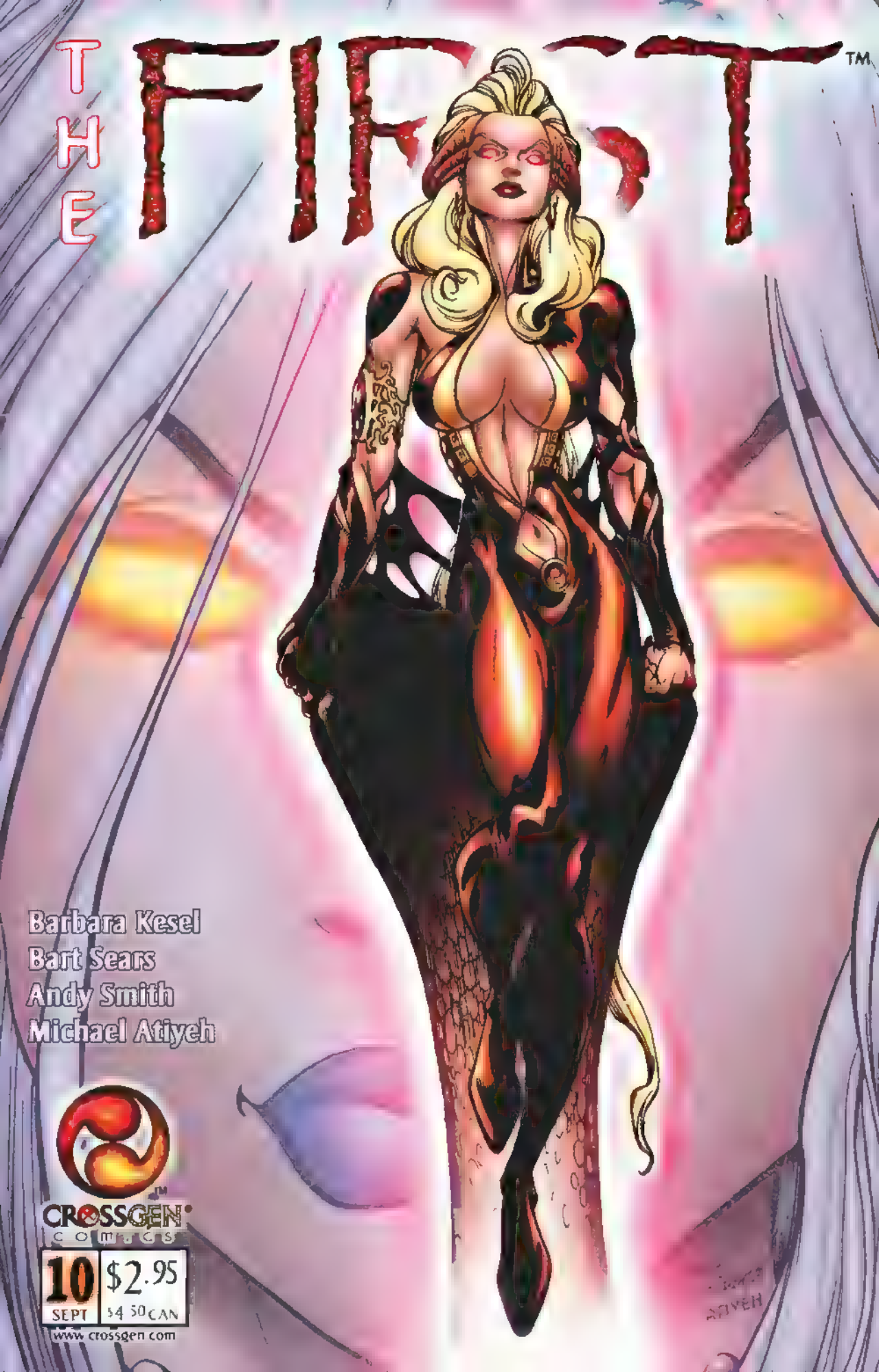
Director of Corporate
Communications
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Brandon Peterson
Art Director
Bart Sears
Assistant Art Director
Pam Davies
Production Director
Sylvia Bretz
Production Assistant
Dave Lanphear
Design Director
Troy Peteri
Design Assistant
Michelle Pugliese
Freelance Coordinator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IN THE BEGINNING...

They were the First.
From their home, Elysia, they held power over all. Worlds were created at their touch, and their only threat was each other. Now the twin towers of the old city and the new city, separated by the Sidelon rift, are united in a new [illegible]. The arrival of contrasts has catalyzed into fear with the discovery of the Sigil-Dragon, beings with powers the First did not [illegible].

Three members of the High Council of each House met secretly within the Sidelon [illegible] to share information about the phenomenon of these newly-[illegible] [illegible].

Trenin the Hunter Sought out the Sigil-Dragon [illegible] [illegible] was inexplicably able to steal power from the [illegible] own personal store.

Trenin had a hunting party in the world of the [illegible] Tadhel, where the Sigil-Dragon was leading the army of Elysia in an [illegible] war against the [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible]. The encounter led to the death of Tadhel and the death of the Secundae Keeper, and the loss of Altwaal's weapon, just hidden on that world.

INGRA the SEETHING BEAUTY

PYREM the DIPLOMAT

ORIUM the ORACLE

TRENIN the HUNTER

GANNISH the SUFFERER

YALA the WARRIOR WOMAN

PERSHA

SEAHN
He won't be just another conquest

Gannish is headed out, at Enson's suggestion, on the trail of a new truth; Yala blames Persha for his impulsive departure. Ingra has magically expanded her palace to signal her dominance and Pyrem watches in concern as Altwaal's obelisk is threatened. Ingra meets with Seahn, promising future trouble, and a stranger comes to Elysia, leaving terror in his wake.

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YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ANSWER ME, ARE YOU?
PYREM?
THERE ARE SOME BURDENS I MUST BEAR ALONE, OLD FRIEND
THE SECRET OF ALTWAAL'S OBELISK IS ONE OF THEM
THE DUTY OF DETERMINING WHAT INGRA MEANS BY THE SUDDEN CANCEROUS GROWTH OF HER PALACE IS ONE I'LL GLADLY SHARE
ALONG WITH THE WORRY OF THE STRANGER STEALING POWER FROM THE FIRST IN A WAY I'M SURE IS FAMILIAR TO YOU
FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, YES
JUST KNOW THIS, TRENIN
THE OBELISK IS THERE TO INSPIRE US
TO REMIND US OF ALTWAAL'S JUSTICE AND COMPASSION
BUT IT IS WE WHO HAVE THE TASK
--OF FINDING OUR OWN LIFE'S MEANING
The amber light entices me, the cold pulse of its beacon matching pace with the frantic hammering of my heart. -

Caught in the siren's call of curiosity unabated, I am a man doomed to drown in the wild tide of the answers I have been assured await me.
If what I suspect to be so proves true, am I not threatening all that which I held most dear?
The existence of what can only be termed other, older gods than the First could irreparably damage our sovereignty over the worlds.
Yet I have been shown the nature of Truth's flesh and cannot again cover her form and retain no recall of it.
So my soul is drawn to the troubling star by a yearning I am too weak to resist...
...yet I hesitate, afraid of what I will discover and forever know to be true...
...proof that the First are not the first...

I am ruled by the need for answers...

...I know no freedom from mystery.

But when all realities are revealed...

...what becomes of the Truthseeker?

MAY YOU NEVER KNOW, GANNISH

WHAT?

GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE CLOUDS--

--I COULD USE A LITTLE HELP DOWN HERE!

YOU WANTED TO TAKE CARE OF HER YOURSELF
I ASSUMED YOU WANTED LAIA TO KNOCK YOU DOWN
VERY FUNNY
OH, BY THE WAY--
I FORGOT TO ASK HOW YOUR MEETING WITH INGRA WENT, SEAHN
MY MEETING WITH INGRA
YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT
WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME ENSON?
NOT JUST YOU, SEAHN
KRRRPT
WHAT WAS THAT?

OH NO, NO NO
NONE OF THIS
NO TELL ING
NO USE RUNNING, LAIA
YOU CAN'T GET HOME W THOUT ME
WATCH ME
YOU NEVER COULD CATCH ME
NOW THAT I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE REALLY LIKE
YOU NEVER WILL

WHAT I'M REALLY LIKE
RISE.
HOW COULD YOU KNOW IF I DON'T?

SCHLOORP
SPLUTCH
SO MUCH FOR THAT
YOU WERE ASKING ABOUT MY *SECRET* MEETING WITH INGRA AND I'M DELIGHTED TO REPORT THAT SHE'S NOT AS COLD AS SHE APPEARS
LOVINGLY WARM, IN FACT
WATCH YOURSELF WITH THAT ONE
GROOM
GET AWAY!
KRRRRRRPT

Oh?
DO YOU KNOW INGRA'S SECRETS TOO?
MUL IPLY.
IF SO, TELL ME SOME
THIS IS OVERCOMPENSATION SEAHN.
MAKING UP FOR YOUR INADEQUACIES?
OR ARE YOU AFRAID I'LL BE THE ONE WHO GOT AWAY
AGAIN?
QUITE A FIGHTER, THAT LAIA
MAYBE I OUGHT TO HOLD OFF ON FINISHING THIS UNTIL I—
IS THAT WISE?

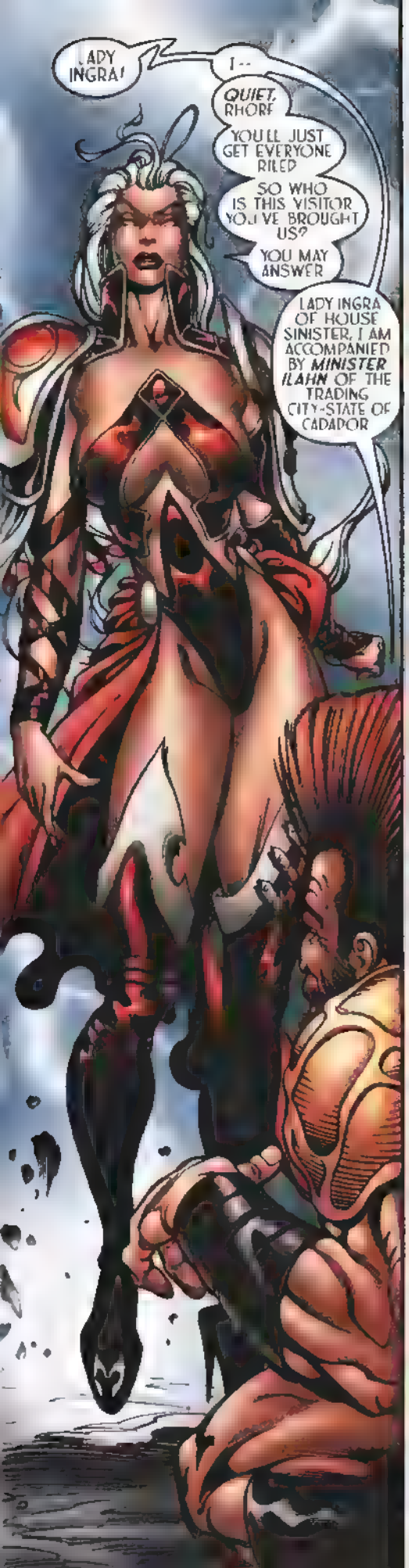
GNNH!
HMMM
NO
AAAAAAH!
THIS SHOULD INSPIRE THE OTHERS TO FALL IN LINE...
I LIKE TO THINK IT'S MY WORDS THAT WILL SWAY THEM
NO
BUT IT IS YOUR *ACTIONS* THEY WILL REMEMBER

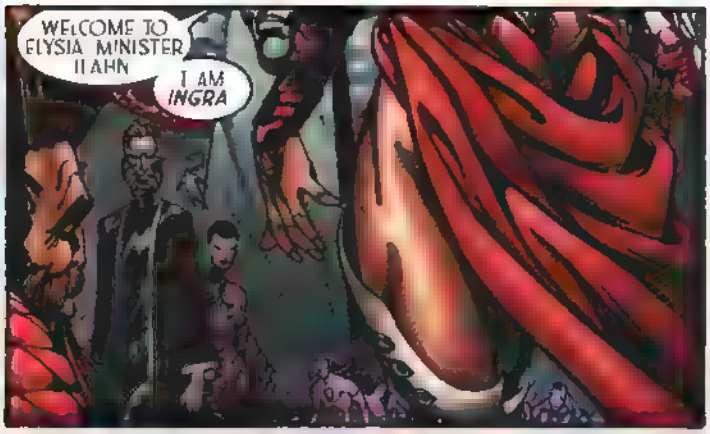
THERE CAN BE NO PROGRESS WITHOUT MOTION, SEAHN
. NO MOVEMENT WITHOUT A LEADER
NOW IS THE TIME, SEAHN
...GIVE THE WORD
KILL.
WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING SEAHN?

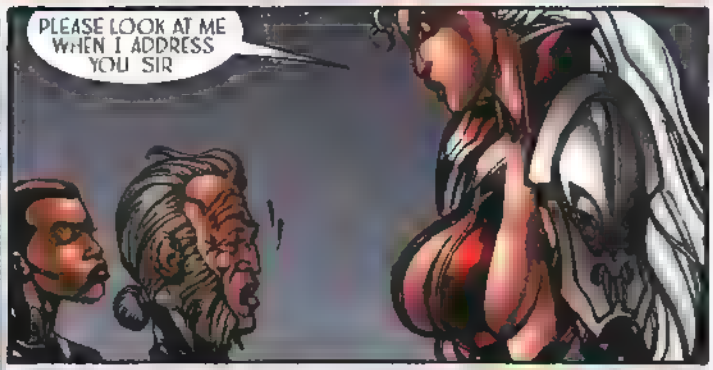
SO, SEAHN HAS MADE AN ALLIANCE, OR DALLIANCE, WITH MOTHER
WHICH HAS SOME KIND OF TIE TO WHAT HE'S DOING ON THAT WORLD, I ASSUME
NOT GOOD
SOMETIMES I HATE WHAT I SEE THROUGH OTHERS EYES
ADD IN THAT STRANGER CAUSING PANIC AMONG THE HERD
RHORF
RHORF CALLED HIM
I DON'T CARE WHO HE IS--I WANT TO KNOW WHY HE'S HERE
I'M SURE MOTHER WILL TAKE MATTERS INTO HER OWN HANDS SOON
AS WILL I
GANNISH COULDN'T TELL ME WHERE TO FIND ALTWAAL IF RAAMIA KNEW, I THINK SHE'D HAVE TOLD SEAHN
ONE OTHER PERSON KNEW HIM WELL
IT'S TIME FOR PYREM AND I TO MEET
BUT PYREM'S ACROSS THE EIDOLON RIFT AND MOTHER'S FORBIDDEN THE BRIDGE TO ME
THEN IGNORE THE BRIDGE
START THINKING LIKE A LEADER
YOU, SHADOWS AND SECRETS ARE ALL CONNECTED
AND THE EIDOLON IS NOTHING BUT

I HAVE CALMED MYSELF RHO RHUSTANE T IS NOW SAFE TO SPEAK
FOR YOU, PERHAPS
BUT WHAT I'M TEMPTED TO SAY MIGHT

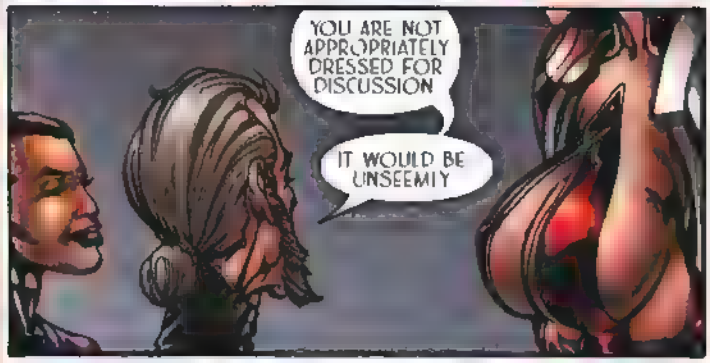
GRRK!
WEREN T MY ORDERS SPECIFIC ENOUGH, RHORE?
STUDY A SIGIL-BEARER IN ITS OWN ENVIRONMENT
NOT BRING IT HOME

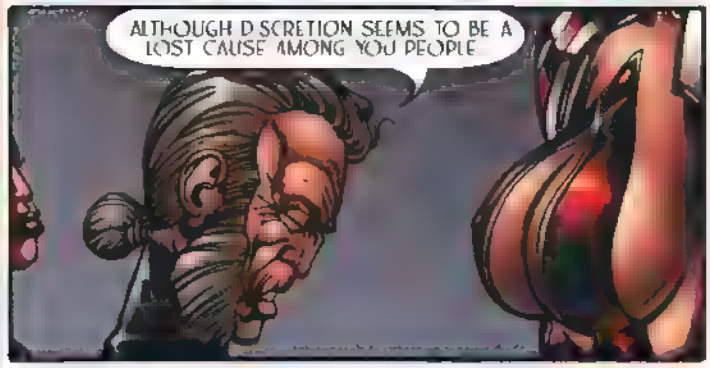

LADY INGRA!
I--
QUIET, RHORF
YOU'LL JUST GET EVERYONE RILED
SO WHO IS THIS VISITOR YOU'VE BROUGHT US?
YOU MAY ANSWER
LADY INGRA OF HOUSE SINISTER, I AM ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTER ILAHN OF THE TRADING CITY-STATE OF CADAPOR


WELCOME TO ELYSIA MINISTER ILAHN
I AM INGRA


PLEASE LOOK AT ME WHEN I ADDRESS YOU SIR

MINISTER ILAHN!
I CANNOT
CANNOT

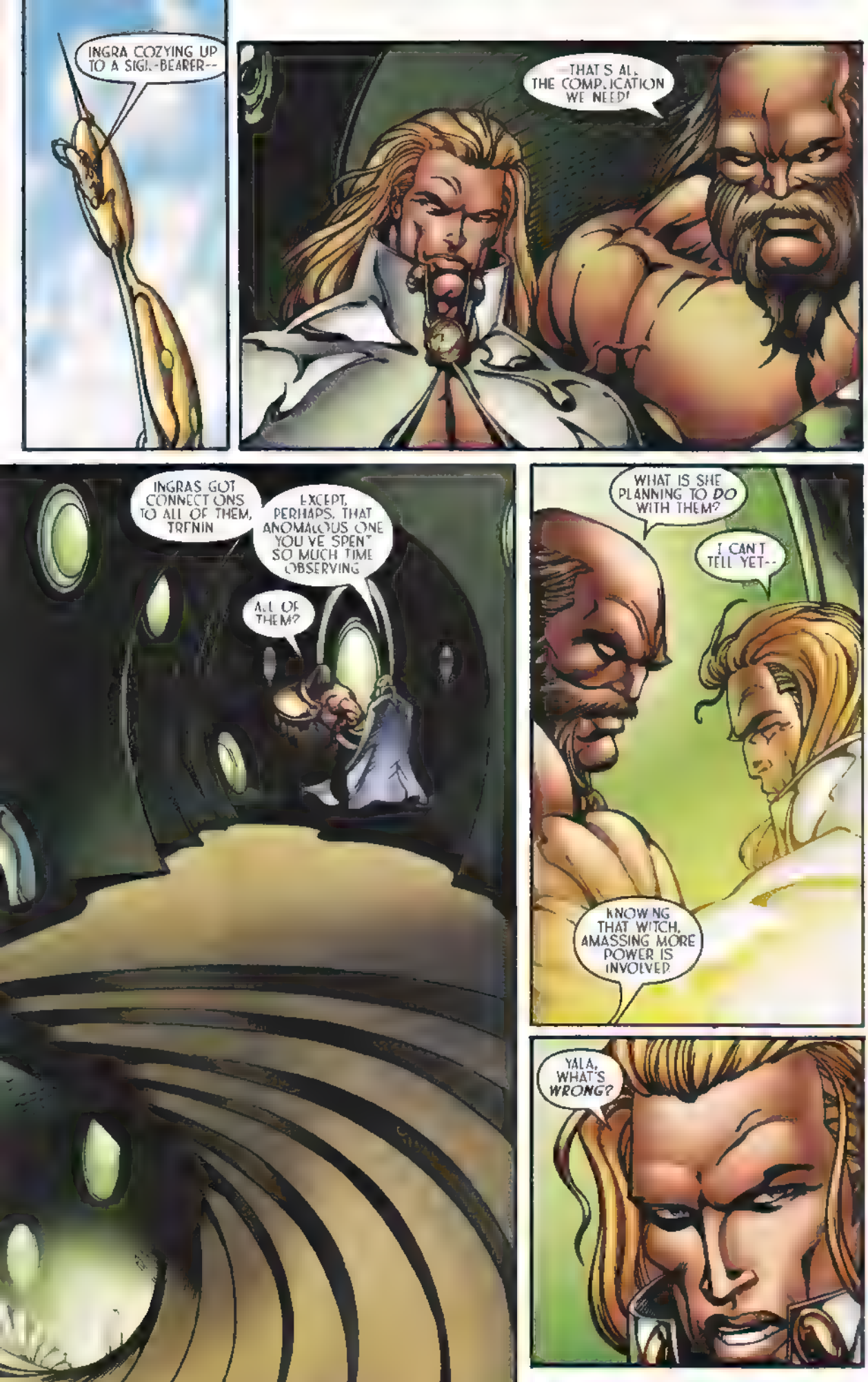

YOU ARE NOT APPROPRIATELY DRESSED FOR DISCUSSION
IT WOULD BE UNSEEMLY


ALTHOUGH DISCRETION SEEMS TO BE A LOST CAUSE AMONG YOU PEOPLE

AND WHAT MIGHT YOJ FIND APPROPRIATE?
HMMM?
LOOK AGAIN
I BELIEVE YOU'LL FIND THIS MORE TO YOUR LIKING
PER A
WHAT AN IN
--CONSIDERATE GESTURE
I AM NOW AT SUFFICIENT EASE TO ENGAGE IN CIVILIZED CONVERSATION
YOU ARE THE LEADER OF THIS LAND, I PRESUME?
YES
THEN WHY HAVE YOU SENT A SPY TO ME!

AS A BUSINESSMAN, I'M SURE YOU APPRECIATE THE NEED FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE OPPOSITION
AND WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE I'M YOUR ADVERSARY?
OTHERS OF YOUR KIND HAVE DONE US DAMAGE
I MYSELF INTEND TO KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE -
IN ORDER NOT TO MAKE THE ENERGY YOU WIELD MINE THROUGH MY INVOLUNTARY THEFT OF IT
I HAVE FOUND THE MEANS TO CONTROL MYSELF
YOU HAVE MY WORD IT WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN WITHOUT CAUSE
YOUR WORD IS ALWAYS GOOD?
I KEEP MY CONTRACTS AS WORDED
MY CONTRACTS ARE ALWAYS SPECIFIC IN THEIR WORDING
I BELIEVE IN DOING WELL IN BUSINESS
I INTEND TO RULE DEMETRA SOON
DO YOU?
JUST ONE WORD?
HOW QUAINT
HMPF

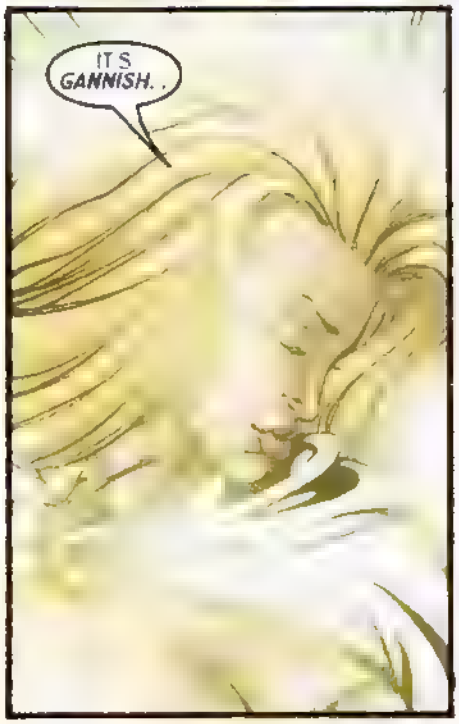
PERHAPS I'LL HAVE TO VISIT YOUR LITTLE WORLD.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I PLAYED WITH TOYS.
I LOOK FORWARD TO IT!
SHE'S MOCKING YOU! I KNOW!
INGRA
HE'S A THREAT TO PERSHA
SEND HIM HOME
RHORE?
YES, MY LADY?
SEND HIM HOME, GO WITH HIM, AND DON'T COME BACK HERE WITHOUT MY PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND MY LEAVE
WHICH WILL NOT BE GRANTED SOON
GNNNH!
YES, LADY INGRA
YOU HEARD THE COMMAND, MINISTER OF CADADOR
I HAVE NO CHOICE


INGRA COZYING UP TO A SIGIL-BEARER--
—THAT'S ALL THE COMPLICATION WE NEED!
INGRA'S GOT CONNECTIONS TO ALL OF THEM, TRENIN
EXCEPT, PERHAPS, THAT ANOMALOUS ONE YOU'VE SPENT SO MUCH TIME OBSERVING
ALL OF THEM?
WHAT IS SHE PLANNING TO *DO* WITH THEM?
I CAN'T TELL YET--
KNOWING THAT WITCH, AMASSING MORE POWER IS INVOLVED
YALA, WHAT'S *WRONG*?

WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

I WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE AN EMPATH TO INTUIT IT
THE SHEER BULK OF YOUR ARMOR IS CLUE ENOUGH

Oh I I WAS JUST THINKING


IT'S GANNISH..

I WENT TO SEE HIM.
PERSHA WAS THERE
INGRA'S DAUGHTER
GANNISH AND PERSHA ?
THEY'RE NOT LOVERS, TRENIN
IT'S WORSE
HE'S GONE
OFF ON A HUNT FOR ALTWAAL SUGGESTED BY HER
ALTWAAL?
ALTWAAL
SO
INGRA'S PALACE AND THE ROGUE SIGIL-BEARER ARE NOT THE ONLY THREATS
THE SIGIL-BEARERS ARE A THREAT WE CAN COUNTER-
--I'VE TAKEN STEPS WITH ONE
BUT IS IT TRUE, PYREM?
IS ALTWAAL ALIVE?

YES

Barbara KESEL
WRITER
Bart SEARS
PENCILER
Andy SMITH
INKER
Michael ATIYEH
COLORIST
Dave LANPHEAR
with TROY PETERI
LETTERERS
The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
Leonard A. Bentile
Chief Financial Officer
Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
Chris Oarr
Director of
Marketing & Sales
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Director of Marketing
& Distribution
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Director of Corporate
Communications
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Brandon Peterson
Art Director
Bart Sears
Assistant Art Director
Pam Davies
Production Director
Sylvia Bretz
Production Assistant
Dave Lanphear
Design Director
Troy Peteri
Design Assistant

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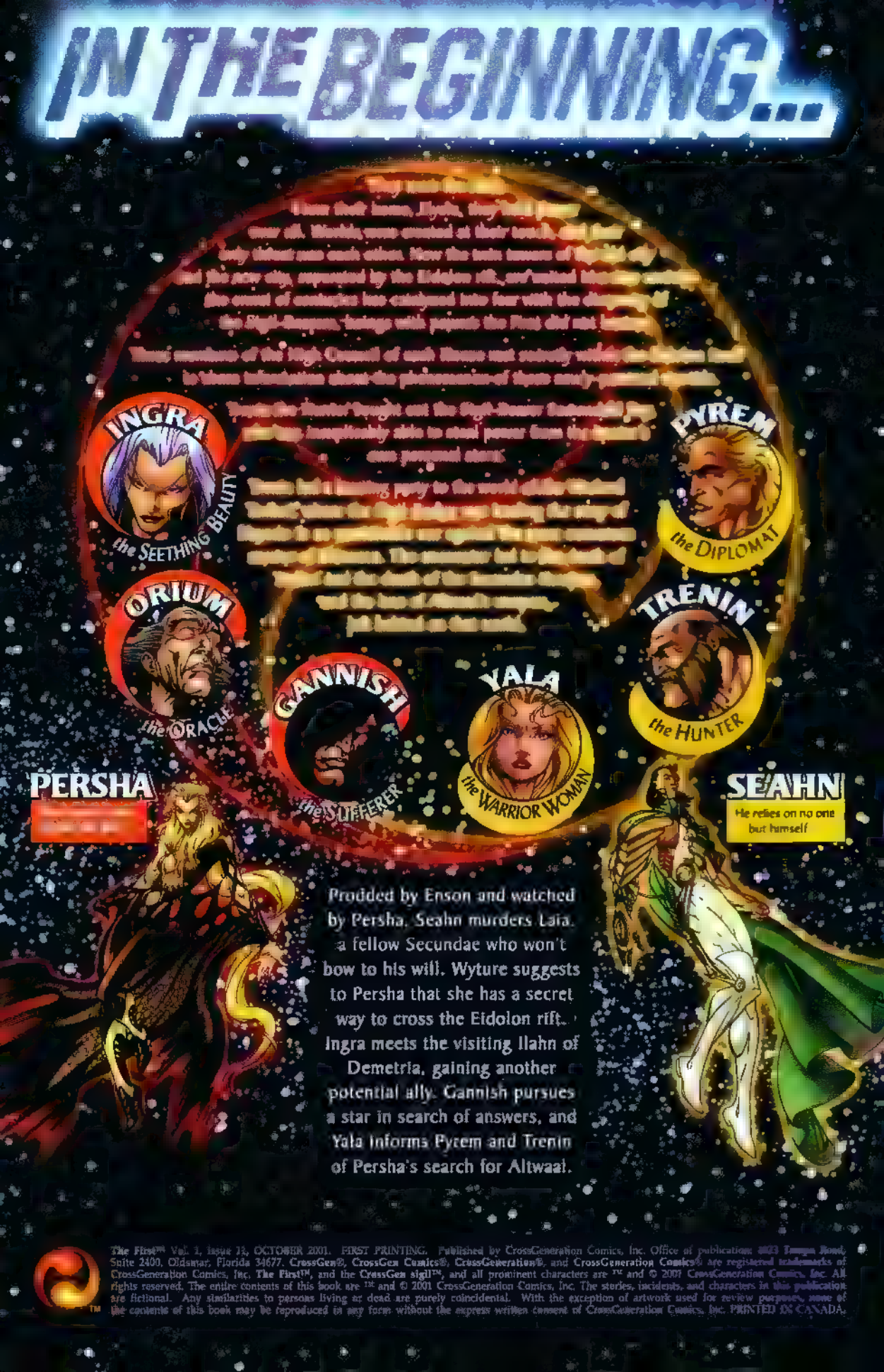
IN THE BEGINNING...



Prodded by Enson and watched by Persha, Seahn murders Laia, a fellow Secundae who won't bow to his will. Wyture suggests to Persha that she has a secret way to cross the Eidolon rift. Ingra meets the visiting Ilahn of Demetria, gaining another potential ally. Gannish pursues a star in search of answers, and Yala informs Pyrem and Trenin of Persha's search for Altwaal.

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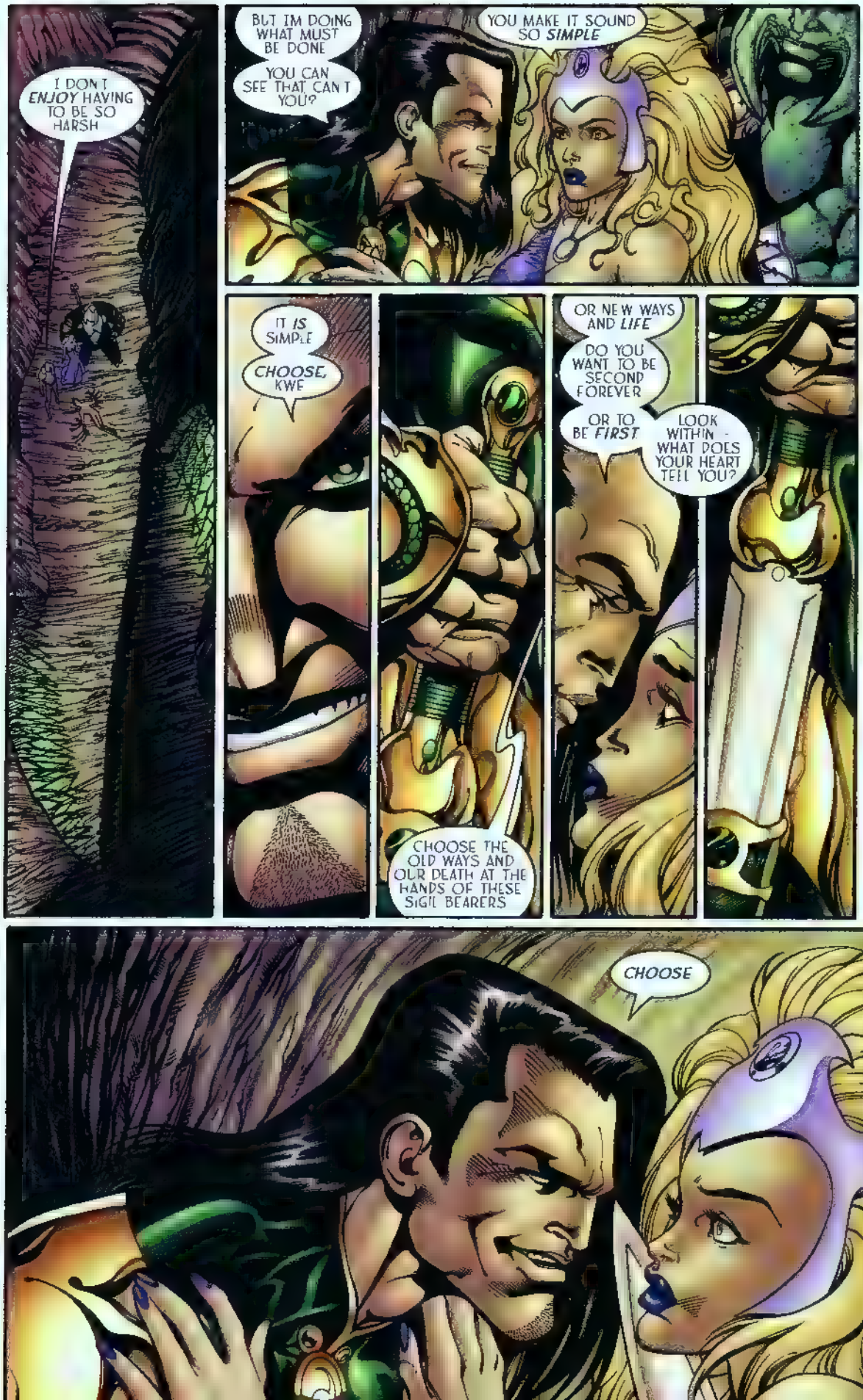
KWE
SEAHN!
BE BOLD, SEAHN
LET ME GO, SEAHN.
I'LL NEVER TELL!
CONVINCE HER
EVEN AT YOUR SPEED, KWE, YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE ENSON'S GRASP
S Y.
OR MINE
BUT YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO, DO YOU?
YOU LIKE WHAT WE'RE PLANNING
YOU'RE DOING WELL
YOU SHY AWAY, YET YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONES WHO COMPLAINED TO ME ABOUT OUR TREATMENT
YES, WE SECUNDAE ARE HELD AS LESS THAN FIRST--
--UNNH! THAT DOESN'T MEAN I WANT TO HELP YOU UNSEAT PYREM!
THEN YOU HAVE A DIFFICULT DECISION TO MAKE.
S Y.
YOU CAN'T GET AROUND MY BLOCKS TO TELEPORT AWAY, KWE, SO LISTEN
JOIN MY FORCES OR ACCEPT A TINY LITTLE MINDWIPE AND YOU'RE FREE TO GO HOME
AND IF I DECLINE?
THEN

YOU
END UP LIKE
LAIA


I DON'T ENJOY HAVING TO BE SO HARSH
BUT IM DOING WHAT MUST BE DONE
YOU CAN SEE THAT CAN'T YOU?
YOU MAKE IT SOUND SO SIMPLE
IT IS SIMPLE
CHOOSE, KWE
CHOOSE THE OLD WAYS AND OUR DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THESE SIGIL BEARERS
OR NEW WAYS AND LIFE
DO YOU WANT TO BE SECOND FOREVER
OR TO BE FIRST
LOOK WITHIN - WHAT DOES YOUR HEART TELL YOU?
CHOOSE

SO, KWE
ARE YOU WITH ME?
Ah
Y-YES

YOU WON'T REGRET THIS
ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEXT ONE?
NOT YET -- I'VE GOT TO GO DO SOMETHING
KWE, MY DEAR DO TAKE A MOMENT TO *APPRECIATE* LAIA'S SELFLESS SACRIFICE
FOR HER DEATH HAS LED SO MANY OTHERS TO DISCOVER THE WISDOM IN MY DESIRE TO TAKE THE REINS OF HOUSE DEXTER
WISDOM?
YOU'VE MADE US FRIGHTENED FOR OUR *LIVES*, SEAHN
EVEN JADED IMMORTALS DON'T WANT TO DIE
HMMM THAT WORKS, TOO.
ALTWAA. *BURN* HIM!
HOW COULD OUR HOUSE HAVE SPAWNED SUCH A MONSTER!
HE'S SO *COLD*, ENSON

"...SOMETIMES HE SEEMS LIKE ONE OF *THEM* HOUSE SIN STER

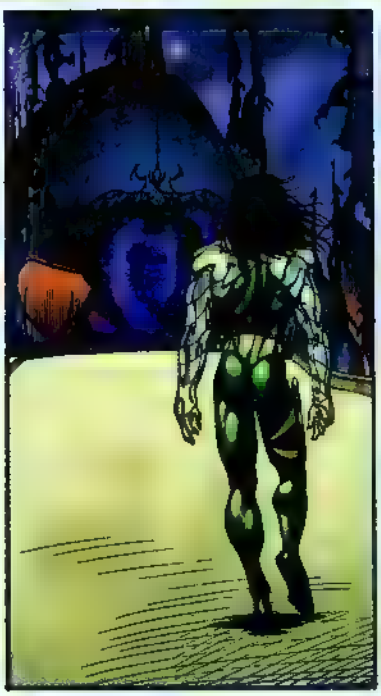
THEN HE SMILES.

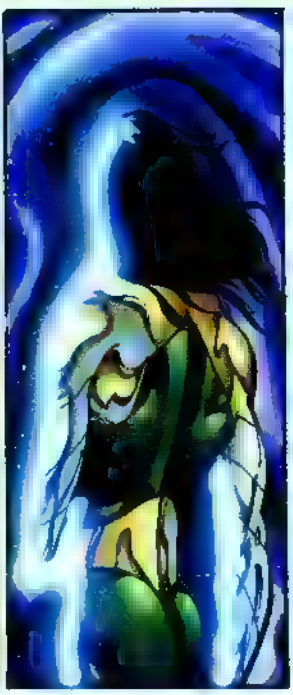
AND I LOOK NTO H S EYES AND THERE'S SOMETHING SO *COMPELLING* ABOUT H M

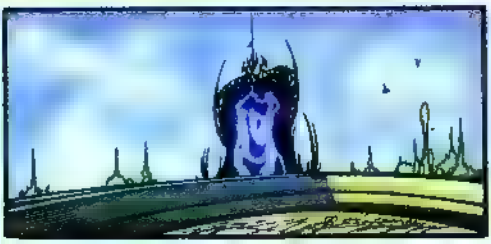
I DON'T TRUST HIS MOTIVES. BUT I M *LOST*

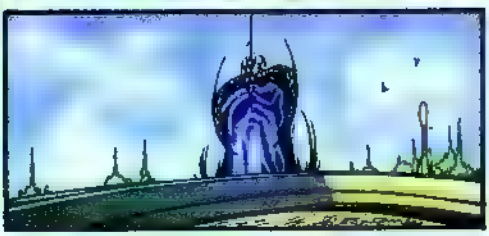
I D DO ANYTHING HE WANTS."

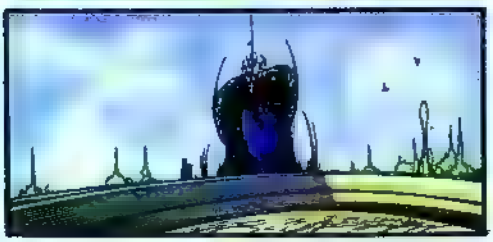
AMBITION IS ALWAYS ATTRACTIVE, KWE, NO MATTER WHAT ITS MOTIVE."

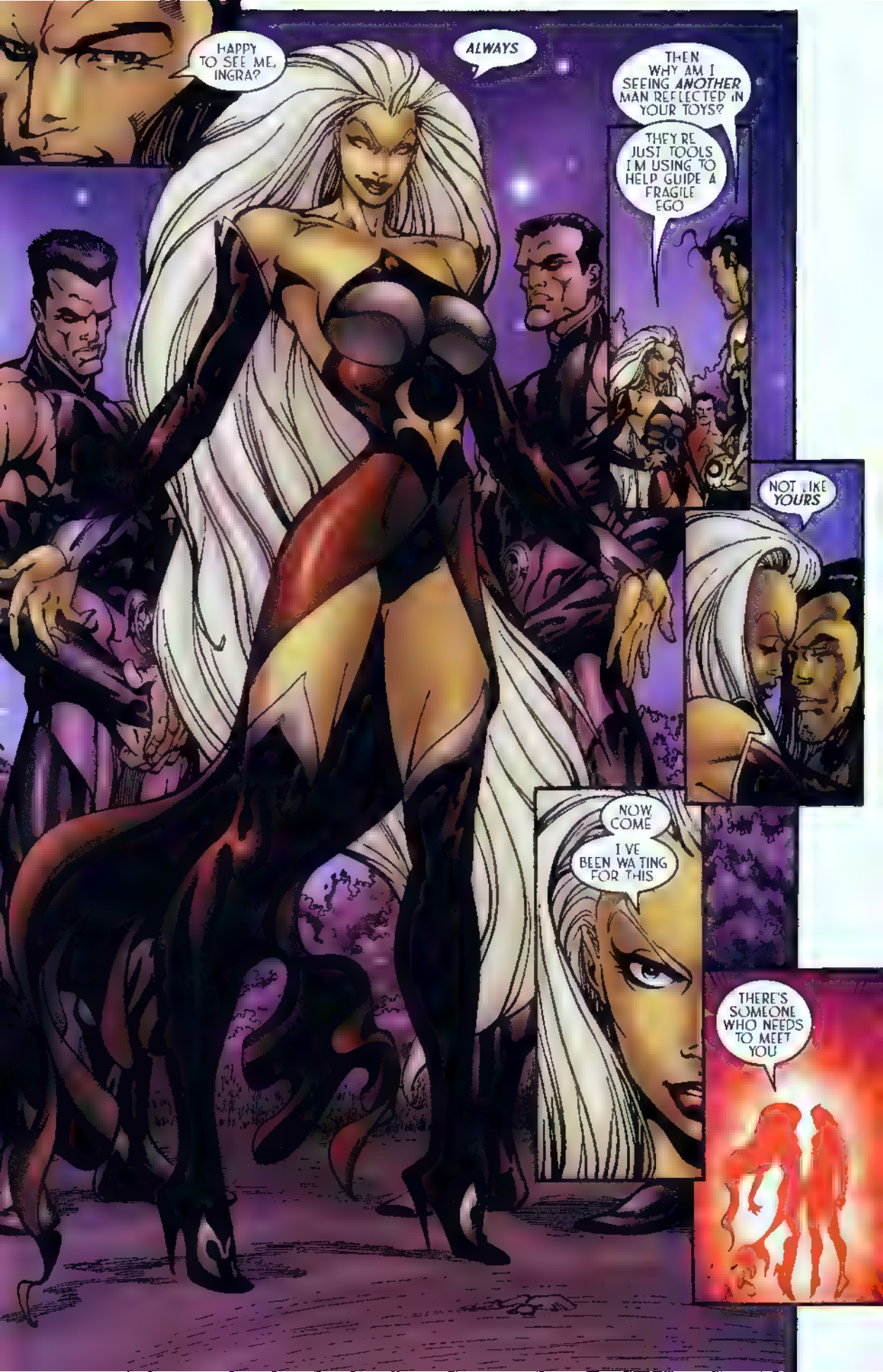











HAPPY TO SEE ME, INGRA?
ALWAYS
THEN WHY AM I SEEING ANOTHER MAN REFLECTED IN YOUR TOYS?
THEY'RE JUST TOOLS I'M USING TO HELP GUIDE A FRAGILE EGO
NOT LIKE YOURS
NOW COME
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS
THERE'S SOMEONE WHO NEEDS TO MEET YOU

THEN AFTER INGRA POUNDS DOWN
-- A REUNITED ELYSIA WILL BE HUNGRY FOR A STRONG AND FAIR LEADER --
WHO'S THIS?
INGRA!
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO HAVE YOU COME TO ME
BRAAG!
AM I UNWELCOME?
OF COURSE NOT!
GIVE US SOME ROOM
GOOD, BECAUSE I'D HATE TO IMPOSE ON YOUR LITTLE INSURRECTION

A MAN'S GOT TO HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN INGRA
I EXPECT NO LESS OF YOU, BRAAG I WOULDN'T HAVE *CHOSEN* YOU IF YOU COULDN'T OFFER ME A CHALLENGE
BRAAG, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET MY OTHER CHALLENGE, *SEAHN* OF *DEXTER*.
ISN'T HE *FAMILIAR?*
YOU *DO* REMIND ME OF SOMEBODY

SINCE I CAN MELT INTO SHADOW
AND IF, AS WYTURE SUGGESTS THE EIDOLON IS NOTHING BUT SHADOW
CAN I TOUCH IT FROM HERE?
JUST REACH OUT
AND PULL ME TO IT, OR T TO ME?

IT WORKED!
I'VE REACHED THE RIFT WITHOUT CROSSING THE BRIDGE --
- SO MOTHER'S PROHIBITION DIDN'T STOP ME!
FROM THE EIDOLON, I CAN GO ANYWHERE!
UNLESS MOTHER DISCOVERS MY TRAVELS
I'LL HAVE TO CHANCE HER TEMPER -- THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT
PYREM
WHERE ARE YOU?
LET ME SEE THROUGH YOUR EYES
SHOW ME WHERE YOU ARE
SO I CAN JOIN YOU

HMMM?
WHAT WAS ?
IT'S NOTHING. I'M ALONE AND SPOOKED BY SHADOWS.
INGRAS GRANDSTANDING AND YA-AS QUESTIONING HAVE DISTURBED ME MORE THAN I REALIZED.
BUT I DID SENSE SOMETHING ODD
PYREM?

IT'S ME
PERSHA

TELL ME, DOES YOUR EMPATHIC NATURE REVEAL TO YOU ANYTHING *MORE* ABOUT ME?
I-I'M *STAGGERED*
YOU'RE --
-- YOU'RE MY CHILD
I NEVER REALIZED
HOW COULD YOU HAVE?
MOTHER DIDN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW
SHE KNEW YOU WOULD INTUIT IT IF WE EVER MET
SO SHE MADE SURE WE DIDN'T
YOU'VE COME TO SEE ME IN DEFIANCE OF HER WISHES?
WHY HAVE YOU COME?
TO CONFRONT ME FOR MY BLINDNESS?
NO, THAT'S NOT IT. I BEAR YOU *NO* ILL WILL FOR NOT SEEING WHAT WAS *HIDDEN* FROM YOU
BUT I *DO* HAVE TO ASK YOU SOMETHING AND I'M CERTAIN YOU AREN'T SUPPOSED TO TELL, BUT
ALTWAAL
I *KNOW* HE'S NOT DEAD
MOTHER'S SET THINGS IN MOTION AND I HAVE VERY LITTLE TIME
THE HOUSES CANNOT REMAIN APART

--I NEED TO KNOW WHERE TO FIND ALTWAAL SO I CAN BRING HIM HOME TO UNITE US!
THAT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE
ALTWAAL IS
PERSHA, WHAT AM I SEEING?
LET ME LOOK
I WOULD GLADLY, BUT IT S GONE
PERSHA ALTWAAL S FATE IS UNKNOWN
HIS REST NG PLACE A HOLY TRUST
WHY HAS HE BECOME SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?

BECAUSE OF A VISION I WITNESSED
WHICH WAS ?
I SAW THE TWO HOUSES COME TOGETHER INTO ONE SIGIL WHEN I WATCHED YOUR HUNTING PARTY SLAY THE SIGIL-BEARER TODOSI --
AAAH --
STOP
YOU'VE ALREADY SAID ENOUGH -- YOU CAN'T LIE TO AN EMPATH
SO YOU CAN LOOK RIGHT THROUGH OUR EYES AND WE DON'T EVEN KNOW YOU'RE THERE
YOU'VE BEEN SPYING ON US --
-- HOW MUCH HAVE YOU SEEN?
AH UH
AT LEAST YOU HAVE THE GRACE TO BE CHAGRINED
YOU'VE TURNED OUT REMARKABLY WELL, CONSIDERING WHO RAISED YOU
YOU WILL *NOT* DISPARAGE MY MOTHER!
WELL *THAT'S* A FAMILIAR TEMPER
ALTWAAL SAID THOSE SAME WORDS!
YOU CREATED A CREATURE OF BOTH HOUSES!
MATED TO YOUR OWN EMPATHY
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN NATURE PYREM?

ONE WHO WILL TAKE ON MY ABANDONED ROLE
FOR ONCE I DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHY DO YOU FEEL YOU MUST LEAVE US ALTWAAL?
TO ENSURE WHAT IS TO COME
IT IS TIME FOR THE FIRST TO FIND THEIR WINGS
IF I CONTINUE TO RULE YOU WILL NEVER ATTAIN WHAT AWAITS YOU
I WILL RETURN, PYREM, BUT ONLY AFTER YOU HAVE SOLVED THE RIDDLE OF YOUR OWN MAKING
MY MAKING A CHILD?
IS THE MEANING OF ALTWAAL'S PROPHECY COMING CLEAR?
I AM SO PLEASED YOU CAME TO SEE ME WITH THIS, PERSHA
SO AM I
THEN YOU'LL HELP ME?
SO YOU'LL BOTH HELP ME!

WITH A PAIR OF ABLE LIEUTENANTS LIKE YOU TWO, WHAT MORE DO I NEED TO CONQUER ELYSIA?
DON'T WORRY, BRAAG YOU'RE MY FAVORITE
HAVE YOUR FORCES PREPARED FOR ACTION
WHEN IT'S TIME TO STRIKE, I WANT YOU READY
WE'LL BE READY
LET'S JUST GET IT RIGHT THIS TIME. THE YEARS AFTER THE RIFT ARE AN ERA I DON'T WANT TO RELIVE
HE'S NOT GOING TO MARCH OVER AND INTERFERE WITH MY HOUSE, IS HE?
NO.
BRAAG'S ALWAYS MORE ATTENTIVE IF HE THINKS THERE'S GOING TO BE A FIGHT
I JUST WANT TO KEEP HIM OCCUPIED AND INTERESTED
DON'T WORRY SEAHN YOU'RE MY FAVORITE

SEAHN HE'S
THERE'S A TAINT TO HIM NOW
ENSON?
WHAT HAS SEAHN DONE?
FOLLOWED THE EXAMPLE SET BY ANOTHER
FOLLOW THE IMAGE I SEND
TO SEE FOR YOURSELF
OH!
THIS WOMAN IS DEAD
HOW STRANGE, WHAT I'M FEELING
I FIND MYSELF REGRETTING THE LOSS OF LIFE
THE WASTE OF POTENTIAL
AS THOUGH THE INDIVIDUAL HAD AS MUCH VALUE AS THE WHOLE
IT WAS THE NECESSARY SACRIFICE
OUR GOAL CANNOT BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT LOSS

SHE SHOULD NOT BE LEFT THIS WAY
LET THE FORM DISSOLVE...
THE BONDS DISSIPATE
THE ENERGY BE GIVEN BACK TO THE WHOLE
LET THIS ONE BECOME AGAIN ONE WITH ALL
THIS IS INTRIGUING
WE ARE NOT JUST EFFECTING CHANGE IN THE ONES WE MENTOR
WE OURSELVES ARE CHANGED
AS WE KNEW WOULD HAPPEN WHEN WE CREATED THESE ASPECTS OF OURSELF

My face and limbs are tattered with the cruel reminders of my struggle against the rift's creation.
I bear my scars voluntarily.
There exists in each of us the capacity to rearrange our forms to suit our desires.
There are those marks that must be borne—
The evidence of another's will asserting dominance over our own—
Mine are solely the result of my stubborn refusal to erase the violent patterning of my flesh...
...the ever-present reminder of my hubris.
Once I dared to suggest that we First were the governors of our own creation and should evolve to a state of communal authority, abolishing the tradition of fealty to one Leader and assuming an equality with Altwaal.
My revolution led not to a golden age but to a city divided and the era of a fiercer god among gods.
Additional justification for my fleshly reminders.

As for my hubris, it continues, magnified.
It has brought me here to this chilling sight.
How will I tell my brethren?
What words can ease the blow?
Here, in the guise of a simple life-bearing world, all illusions of the First's preeminent position are shattered by the knowledge I perceive in its presence.
Truth claws through to my soul, its damage to my reality irreparable.
For this world somehow spawned us...
...yet we are not of this world.

Barbara
KESEL
WRITER
Bart
SEARS
PENCILER
Andy
SMITH
INKER
Michael
ATIYEH
COLORIST
Dave
LANPHEAR
LETTERER
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THE FIRST™

SEPTEMBER 11th, 2001

Barbara Kesel Andrea Di Vito Rob Hunter Jason Lambert

IN THE BEGINNING...

Seahn's influence over his fellow Secundae rebels grows as they choose not to accept Lata's fate – death at his hands. Ingra introduces Seahn to Braag, noting the similarities between the men who will act as her lieutenants in their two Houses. Persha meets her father; Pyrem is stunned at the realization and her questions about Altwaal. Wyture notes to Enson that their roles as mentors are influencing them, and Gannish reaches...Earth.

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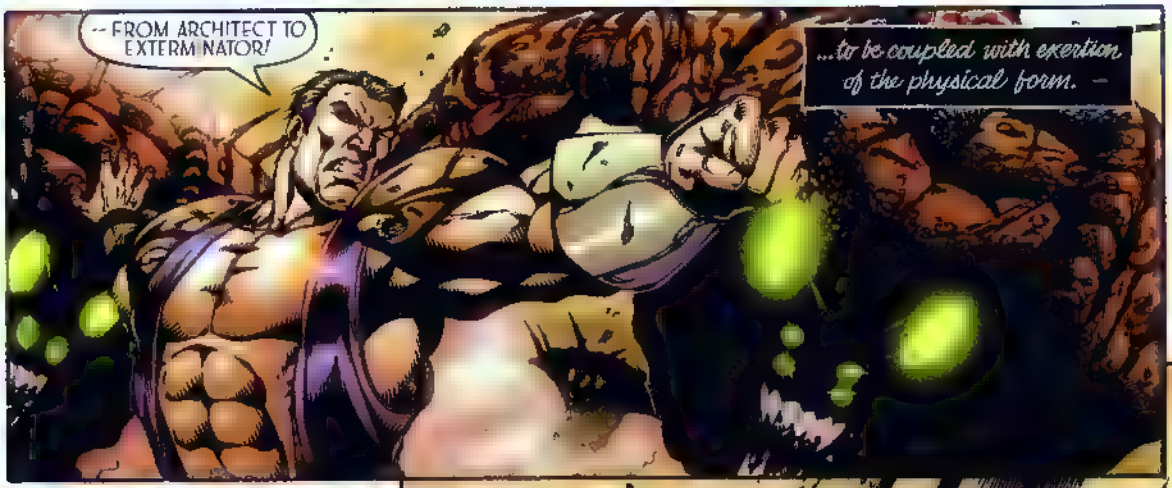
These people are alien to me, yet so very familiar.
I wander among them, invisible to their senses, yet connected to them by temperament.
They fight what seems to be a ceaseless battle against an overwhelming foe, and their souls are tired from the exertion.

The melancholy of their loneliness calls to me--
Details are the province of investigation or interrogation, but I can sense they have survived a great loss.
I'M SO SICK OF FIGHTING THESE BUGS! WHERE DID THEY COME FROM *THIS* TIME?! DID ANYBODY SEE A *GATE*?
LITTLE *BUSY*...!
DON'T GET *OVERWHELMED*! EVERYONE CONCENTRATE ON THE ONES *CLOSEST* TO YOU!
They are displaced, awkward in their interactions...
They were not close allies before whatever tragedy occurred to spawn their current brotherhood. --

Their leader is a woman who has much experience at that role...
...but little in combat. Her successes owe as much to luck as skill.
VERITYN, I SAID STAY BEHIND ME!
CAPRICIA! OVER THERE!
The child among them is much like myself.
He came near to sensing my presence.
I SEE HIM VERITYN STAY BEHIND ME
NO, CAPRICIA!
NOT THE BUGS! I MEAN SOMETHING DIFFERENT!
It took every wile practiced over centuries to blind his vision.
LET ME TAKE CARE OF THAT NUISANCE FOR YOU CAPRICIA!
DON'T BOTHER! I'VE GOT IT ALREADY!

I'M AT TWELVE! YOU?
THIRTEEN
LIAR
The energy manipulators might have registered my disturbance to the atmosphere surrounding us...
...but bickering consumes their every stray moment.
They are brothers or rivals, I can only assume. -
One member of their band was a man of considerable brawn who appears to prefer the work of the mind...
I DON'T WAKE UP THOUSANDS OF CENTURIES LATER JUST TO CHANGE CAREERS --


-- FROM ARCHITECT TO EXTERMINATOR!
...to be coupled with exertion of the physical form. -

They are so like us. They could almost be mistaken for members of the First.

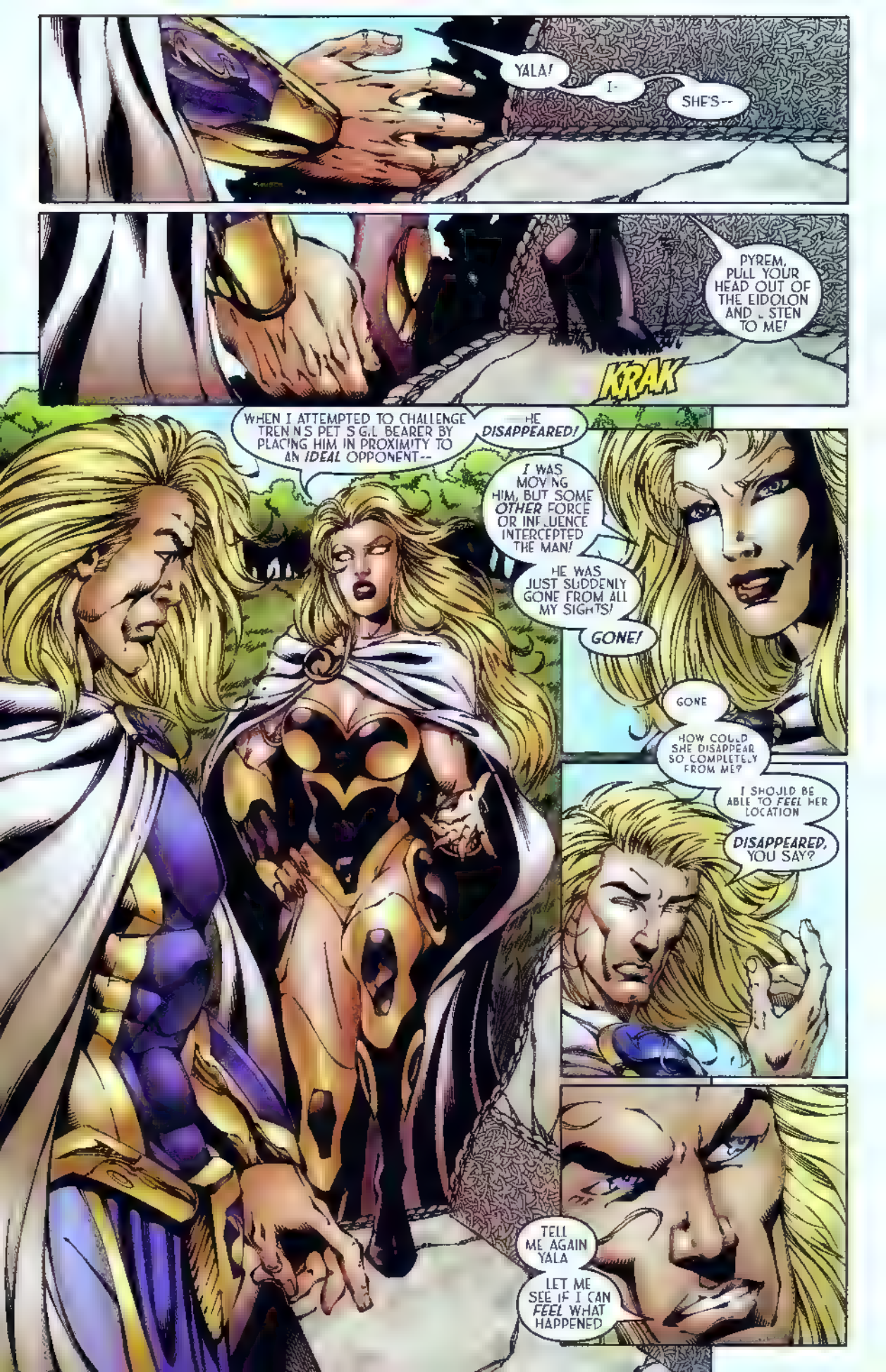
But they have a... reality... to them that we lack.

They differ from us in one substantial mode of manner...
...they do not love conflict. They flinch from it, both in action and interaction.
My beloved Yala would find their techniques inelegant, their tactics crude...—
...but they sufficed to bring the battle I witnessed to a conclusion favoring this small battalion.

As one who pursues inescapable truths, I often find myself overwhelmed by uncompromising facts.
Viewing these familiar strangers, verity clutched my heart with fingers of chill ice.
These people -- they are older than we are. Older than the First!
Cursed I am, to bear this knowledge.
I do not know what this means for us...
...but I know there is nothing more I can learn here without revealing myself to them...
...thereby eliciting more facts of their history from their every word and gesture.
They share a past which may supersede our own history, reducing the status of the First to secondary...
...an eventuality I am ill-prepared to consider.
Thus I gave in to fearful avoidance and removed myself from that place.
I shall let it lie until such time as I cannot avoid facing its truth.

PERSHA
HELP YOU?
HOW COULD I NOT AID MY ONLY CHILD?
YET I CANNOT LEAD YOU TO ALTWAAL
I'M ASTOUNDED THAT I NEVER NOTICED THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN US.
IN IMAGES OF YOU, I SAW ONLY INGRA
MY MOTHER DOESN'T LIKE TO ADMIT SHE HAS ANY TIES TO HOUSE DEXTER LET ALONE YOU
IF SHE KNEW I WAS HERE SHE'D

SOMEONE'S COMING... WERE YOU EXPECTING A VISITOR?
NO, I
I CAN'T BE SEEN HERE!
SHIELD YOURSELF FROM SIGHT-- I'LL SEND AWAY WHOEVER IT IS...
...AND THEN WE CAN CONTINUE THIS DISCUSSION
PYREM, AS MUCH AS I'VE ENJOYED OUR MEETING PLEASE KEEP IT BETWEEN US
IT CAN'T BE KNOWN THAT I KNOW ABOUT YOU
YES, I UNDERSTAND THE WRATH OF INGRA IS A POWERFUL THING
OF COURSE YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND IT'S YOUR SPECIALTY ISN'T IT?
GREETINGS, PYREM!
THE MOST ASTOUNDING THING HAS JUST HAPPENED!


YALA!
I-
SHE'S--
PYREM, PULL YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE EIDOLON AND LISTEN TO ME!
KRAK
WHEN I ATTEMPTED TO CHALLENGE TRENNS PET SIGIL BEARER BY PLACING HIM IN PROXIMITY TO AN IDEAL OPPONENT--
HE DISAPPEARED!
I WAS MOVING HIM, BUT SOME OTHER FORCE OR INFLUENCE INTERCEPTED THE MAN!
HE WAS JUST SUDDENLY GONE FROM ALL MY SIGHTS!
GONE!
GONE
HOW COULD SHE DISAPPEAR SO COMPLETELY FROM ME?
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FEEL HER LOCATION
DISAPPEARED, YOU SAY?
TELL ME AGAIN YALA
LET ME SEE IF I CAN FEEL WHAT HAPPENED

PERSHA!
PERSHA?
WHERE ARE YOU, CHILD?
YOU'RE INVISIBLE TO ME!
TO ME!
ORIUM!
COME HERE!

BY NEVOLE'S WOMB, WHAT...?
INGRA?
I HAVE NEED OF YOU, SEER
I CAN'T FIND MY DAUGHTER
I NEED YOU TO SHOW ME WHERE SHE'S H.DING
FIND HER FOR ME, ORIUM...
-- PLEASE
HOW UNLIKE YOU, INGRA
TO DEBASE YOURSELF AND ADMIT MY VALUE
CAN I REWARD YOU WITH THE ANSWER?
LET THE WAVES OF MY SIGHT TUMBLE SMOOTH THE MAGE YOU DESIRE

HER LEGACY OF SHADOWS SURROUNDS HER LIGHT. ALTWAAL'S GIFT.
THERE SHE IS. AND ISN'T
WHERE?
SHOW ME!
HAS THE DRAIN FROM THE BLOODLETTING TALONS OF AMBITION BLUNTED YOUR KNOWING WAYS, INGRA?
COULD YOU NOT SEE WHAT LIES ADJACENT TO YOUR OWN HOME?
JUST SHOW ME, OLD FOOL!
YOU CALL ME FOOL? PERSHA SPEAKS TO AN IMAGE OF STONE AS IF IT WOULD REPLY--SHE SEEKS ANSWERS OF ALTWAAL HIMSELF--
SHOW ME!

WYTURE, HE CONFIRMED IT--

ALTWAAL *IS* STILL ALIVE!

HE COULDN'T TELL ME WHERE TO FIND HIM, BUT NOW THAT I KNOW IT CAN BE DONE. IT'S JUST A MATTER OF SEARCHING

BUT IF ALTWAAL IS ALIVE AND HE

BELIEVES WE SHOULD BE REUNITED, WHY

HE NEVER RETURNED ON HIS OWN?

I SUSPECT HE MAY BE ASHAMED OF US. WE'VE HARDLY DONE MORE THAN PLAY OR FIGHT AMONGST OURSELVES SINCE HE CREATED THE RIFT

HE MAY BE WAITING FOR US TO SHOW THE SIGNS OF MORE MATURITY THAN THAT

WE *ARE* CAPABLE OF MORE. I'M SURE OF IT!

ONCE I FIND ALTWAAL I CAN CONVINCE HIM TO RETURN TO US. I KNOW IT

ALTWAAL?

HOW DID SHE SAY THAT NAME?

SHE SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SPEAK IT, LET ALONE FOLLOW THIS FOOLISH COURSE OF ACTION!

WHO HAS BROKEN THE CONSTRAINT I PUT IN PLACE?

WHO?

SHOW ME!

AH! OF COURSE!

ALTWAAL!

SUCH ANGER!

ALTWAAL--?

BUT--?

HIS OBELISK SHOULD BE DESTROYED!

IT'S AN AFFRONT TO OUR WAYS TO SUGGEST WE HONOR THE MAN WHO DARED PLAY GOD TO US ALL!

WYTURE, WHAT ARE YOU SEEING?
I WAS JUST WATCHING
-IMAGINING
-YOUR MOTHER'S REACTION
IT IS--IT WILL BE--AS VOLATILE AS HER INNER NATURE, I EXPECT

LISTEN CAREFULLY-
YOU'RE ALL HERE BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE WE SECUNDAE HAVE BEEN UNFAIRLY REPRESSED--
DE ND
-- AND THAT THE DEXTER HIGH COUNCIL IS BLINDLY IGNORING THE GROWING POWER OF THE MORTAL SIGIL BEARERS
YOU ALL AGREE WITH ME THAT CHANGE *MUST* HAPPEN
YOU ALL BELIEVE THAT I CAN FORCE AN END TO THE NEVERENDING RULE OF *PYREM*
ALTHOUGH MANY OF YOU REQUIRED SOME CONVINCING

YOU'RE ALL WITH ME NOW

I THINK I'M FINALLY CONVINCED SEAHN'S GOT THE ROCKS TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN

I'M NOT AS CERTAIN HE'S GOT OUR BEST INTERESTS IN MIND, VIHAM

SEAHN'S DEVELOPING A HARDER EDGE--HIS KILLING OF LAIA? -- I'M NOT CONVINCED THAT WAS NECESSARY

HE'S GETTING OUT OF CONTROL

HE'S GETTING *INTENSE*

EXCITING

THERE'S SOMETHING *UNTAMED* ABOUT HIM

YOU SHOULD SEE IF IT RUBS OFF, GRACOS. IT MIGHT BE FUN TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS

DON'T LET SEAHN WORRY YOU TOO MUCH

WE GET WHAT WE WANT OUT OF THIS REBELLION -- EQUAL STATUS WITH THE FIRST

IF SEAHN GETS TOO MUCH OUT OF CONTROL

THERE'S THREE OF US AND ONLY ONE OF HIM

YOU THREE CRAVE THE NOVELTY OF HIS WILDNESS BUT FEAR THE LIMITLESS NATURE IT REVEALS.

YOU ARE CHILDREN PLAYING WITH FIRE

IT'S TIME TO GO, MY FRIENDS

LET'S HEAD

-- HOME

REMEMBER YOUR VOWS
YOU'VE ALL PROMISED TO STEP UP AND SUPPORT ME WHEN I GIVE THE SIGNAL
IF YOU BEGIN TO QUAVER IN YOUR RESOLVE JUST THINK BACK TO WHERE WE ARE NOW
WE WOULDN'T WANT ANY MORE DEAD BODIES TURNING UP IN THE PLAZA
WELL DONE SEAHN
NOT YET--TELL ME THAT WHEN YOU CALL ME LEADER, ENSON
.SOON

MENTOR'S COUNSEL Part I: Script BARBARA KESEL • Pencils ANDY SMITH • Inks ANDREW HENNESSY
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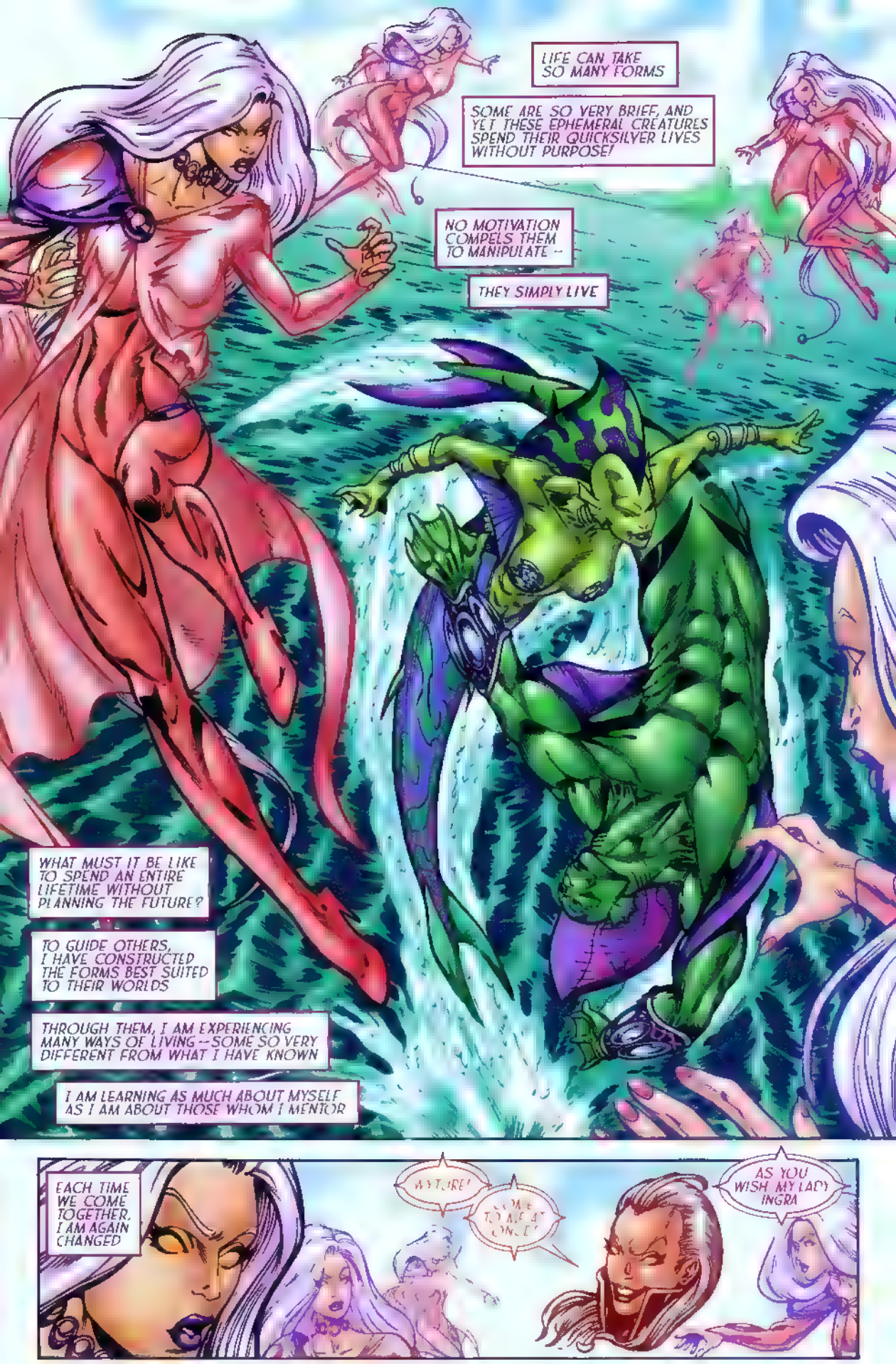
ALTWAAL'S LEGACY


LIFE CAN TAKE SO MANY FORMS
SOME ARE SO VERY BRIEF, AND YET THESE EPHEMERAL CREATURES SPEND THEIR QUICKSILVER LIVES WITHOUT PURPOSE!
NO MOTIVATION COMPELS THEM TO MANIPULATE --
THEY SIMPLY LIVE
WHAT MUST IT BE LIKE TO SPEND AN ENTIRE LIFETIME WITHOUT PLANNING THE FUTURE?
TO GUIDE OTHERS, I HAVE CONSTRUCTED THE FORMS BEST SUITED TO THEIR WORLDS
THROUGH THEM, I AM EXPERIENCING MANY WAYS OF LIVING--SOME SO VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT I HAVE KNOWN
I AM LEARNING AS MUCH ABOUT MYSELF AS I AM ABOUT THOSE WHOM I MENTOR
EACH TIME WE COME TOGETHER, I AM AGAIN CHANGED
MISTRESS!
AS YOU WISH MY LADY INGRA

ONE DAY MY PURPOSE WILL BE MADE CLEAR TO ALL
UNTIL THAT TIME, I HAVE MY ROLE TO PLAY
TO LIVE
WHERE ARE YOU, WYTURE? DON'T KEEP ME WAITING
I'M HERE, LADY INGRA
WHY DO YOU WISH TO SEE ME?
WYTURE I NEED YOUR HELP
YOU KNOW PERSHA BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE--
--YOU TWO ARE ALWAYS TOGETHER
MY DAUGHTER HAS INDULGED AN IDIOTIC OBSESSION OF LATE
SHE IS DANGEROUS TO HERSELF AND NEEDS OUR GUIDANCE.
WATCH OVER HER FOR ME, WYTURE
REPORT TO ME HER THOUGHTS
WE MUST PROTECT PERSHA FROM HER OWN FOLLY
YOU WANT ME TO SPY ON PERSHA FOR
WANT ME TO SPY ON PERSHA FOR
WANT ME TO SPY ON PERSHA FOR YOU?

NO
NO
NO
NOOOOO?
I AM THE LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER!
MY WILL IS TO BE OBEYED!
I'LL TEACH YOU TO DEFY ME!
S IT SO DEFIANT THAT I DON'T WISH TO BE YOUR INFORMANT AGAINST MY FRIEND?
IS IT THAT THE ONE WHO NEEDS A LESSON IN DEFIANCE, INGRA—

--IS YOU?

PERSHA HAS TO MAKE HER OWN STEPS AND MISSTEPS, INGRA
SURVIVING HER MISTAKES WILL STRENGTHEN HER
I'LL HELP THAT TO HAPPEN
AS I WILL ALL THOSE I MENTOR
YOU ARE STRONG ALREADY MISTRESS OF SINISTER.
AND YOU WILL GAIN MORE POWER BEFORE THIS IS ALL PLAYED OUT
BUT *SHE* WILL SURPASS YOU
WHO--
HOW CAN YOU RESIST MY SPELLS?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN TO MY DAUGHTER--
WHAT ARE YOU, WYTURE?

I AM MANY AND ONE AND YOU ARE A LOVING MOTHER WHO MUST ALLOW HER CHILD THE FREEDOM TO GROW
YOUR INFLUENCE S STRONG, BUT YOU CAN'T KEEP HER A CHILD FOREVER
YOU'RE SAYING I . . ?
YOU RULE ONE HOUSE AND WISH TO RULE BOTH
HOW DO YOU . . ?
YOU'VE CREATED THE LIVING LINK BETWEEN THE HOUSES IN PERSHA AND YOU SUSPECT SHE WILL RECEIVE THE ROLE YOU CRAVE
YOU FEAR YOU WILL HATE YOUR OWN CHILD THAT THE ANGER WHICH FUELS YOU WILL ENGULF HER
BUT FOR ALL YOUR PASSION, YOU COULD NEVER HATE PERSHA
JUST AS YOU WILL NEVER TRULY HATE PYREM
JUST HELP KEEP HER SAFE, WYTURE . . .
. . NO MATTER WHAT YOU TRULY ARE

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THE
FIRST
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IN THE BEGINNING...

[illegible]

From their home, Elysia, they held power [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] who was inexplicably able to steal power from the hunter's own personal store.

[illegible]

[illegible] and the death of the Secundae Keeper, and the loss of Altwaal's weapon, left behind on that world.

INGRA the SEETHING BEAUTY

PYREM the DIPLOMAT

ORIUM the ORACLE

TRENIN the HUNTER

GANNISH the SUFFERER

YALA the WARRIOR WOMAN

PERSHA

SEAHN

He would make the Secundae First...

Gannish's quest ends with a bigger mystery: who are the beings inhabiting the ancient blue-green world? Persha slips away from her visit to House Dexter and her first meeting with her father. Yala brings Pyrem the news that the Sigil-Bearer Trenin's been watching has disappeared! Ingra's search for her missing daughter finds her at Altwaal's obelisk, and Seahn plans the Secundae's revolt against the First...

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I took my leave of the aquamarine globe that had offered me evidence of heresy.
To imagine the First as less than first – and younger than the mortal race struggling there – was to embrace a thought which threatened to be unparalleled in its unpopularity.
The euphoria of discovery balanced by the presentiment of disaster, I returned home...
...my task now to be an unwanted oracle to my people.
My travels had not gone unnoticed. The formidable Ingra summoned me to her side.
GANNISH

Ingra is a dangerous creature.
The passions that race in tandem with her fury are her strength...
...and most men's weakness.
Our House has changed since Ingra wrested its reins from Orium...

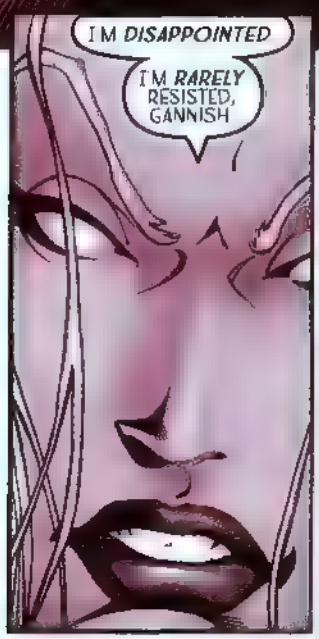
...where once wisdom led, now emotion rules.
THERE YOU ARE
I MUST HAVE INTERRUPTED QUITE THE PERSONAL MOMENT GANNISH, THAT YOU WOULD NOT NOTICE THE NTENSITY OF MY CA...
I HAVE COME AT YOUR REQUEST, NGRA. NOT MY ONGING
PLEASE STATE YOUR BUSINESS AND SPARE ME YOUR CH NG
THEN ISTEN TO MY WORDS NOW AND ISTEN CAREFULLY
I HAVE BEGUN TO ACT ON A PLAN OF MY OWN DEVISING, WITHOUT BENEFIT OF MY COUNCIL'S ADVICE
To my sickened surprise, Ingra spoke words I had heard her speak years before...

I AM ADVISING YOU OF MY WILL AND INTENT
SO THAT YOU WILL NOT CROSS ME
I TRUST YOU CAN DISCERN THE TRUTH IN MY WORDS GANN SH?
YOUR GOAL IS QUITE CLEAR, INGRA
BUT MY VIEW OF YOUR CHILD S NOT
SHOW ME HER FACE INGRA
SO THE TRUTHSEEKER CAN SATISFY H S CURIOSITY AS TO HER FATHERS IDENT TY?
NO.
SHOW ME!
IF YOU INTEND TO DEPOSE ORIUM AS OUR LEADER, I INSIST ON KNOWING WHERE YOUR LOYALTIES LIE!
HALT!
IS THE FATHER OF S NISTER, INGRA -- OR DEXTER?
ARE YOU LOYAL TO OUR HOUSE?

MOVE YOUR BLADE LITTLE SECUNDAE
HMPF -- FIRST-BORN OR NO, I'LL JUST BET MY SWORD WILL MAKE YOU BLEED
I AM CHARGED WITH THE CHILD'S SAFETY GANNISH. YOU COME NO FURTHER WITHOUT INGRA'S SAY
LET ME SEE THE CHILD!
I'VE SENT HER AWAY GANNISH
IT WAS TOO NOISY HERE
SHINNSA, YOU ARE DISMISSED
LISTEN TO ME, SEER OF VERITIES AND GAUGE THE TRUTH OF MY ANGER!
DO NOT ACCUSE ME OF BEING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF HOUSE DEXTER WHEN YOUR OWN MOTIVES ARE MUDDIED!
YOU MAY HAVE SOWN THE SEEDS OF DISCONTENT WITHIN ELYSIA, GANNISH, BUT I WILL BE THE ONE TO BRING TRUE CHANGE!
YOU KNOW I SPEAK TRUE!

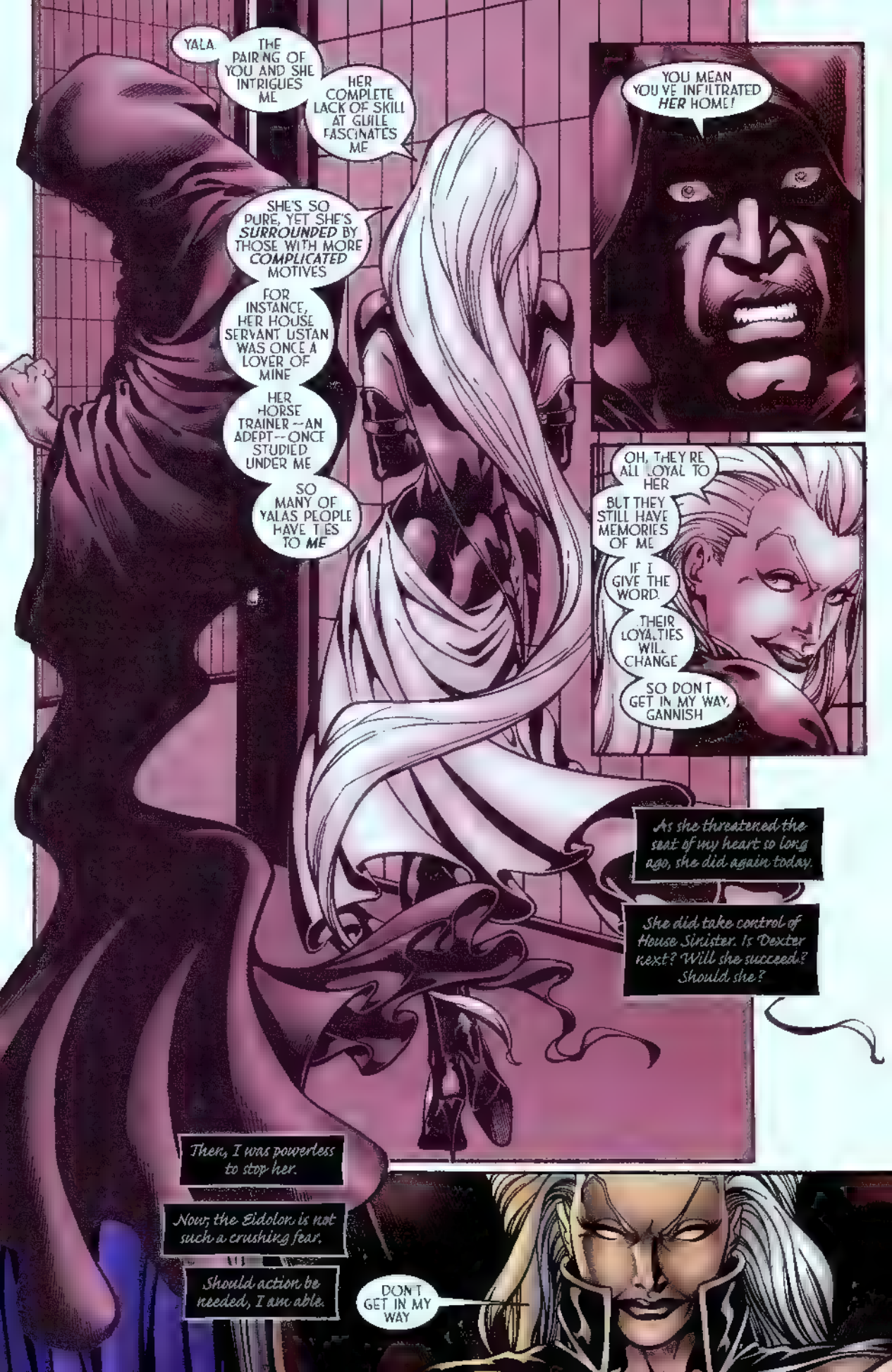
OH, GANNISH
YOU'VE ALWAYS RESISTED ME
WHY IS THAT?
YOU KNOW WHY
BUT SHE IS SO FAR AWAY—
—ALL THE WAY ACROSS THE EIDOLON THAT SCARRED YOU—
AND YOU'RE HERE
WITH ME
WITH YOU

I WOULD CROSS THE EIDOLON AGAIN BEFORE I'D BETRAY MY LOVE
NEVER WITH YOU.


I'M DISAPPOINTED
I'M RARELY RESISTED, GANNISH

THERE'S A THREAT TO YOUR WORDS

I'D NEVER THREATEN YOU -- WE'RE TOO CLOSELY MATCHED
BUT I FIND I AM VERY INTERESTED IN THIS POWERFUL LOVE YOU FEEL


YALA
THE PAIRING OF YOU AND SHE INTRIGUES ME
HER COMPLETE LACK OF SKILL AT GUILE FASCINATES ME
SHE'S SO PURE, YET SHE'S *SURROUNDED* BY THOSE WITH MORE *COMPLICATED* MOTIVES
FOR INSTANCE, HER HOUSE SERVANT USTAN WAS ONCE A LOVER OF MINE
HER HORSE TRAINER --AN ADEPT-- ONCE STUDIED UNDER ME
SO MANY OF YALAS PEOPLE HAVE TIES TO *ME*
YOU MEAN YOU'VE INFILTRATED *HER* HOME!
OH, THEY'RE ALL LOYAL TO HER
BUT THEY STILL HAVE MEMORIES OF ME
IF I GIVE THE WORD
THEIR LOYALTIES WILL CHANGE
SO DON'T GET IN MY WAY, GANNISH
As she threatened the seat of my heart so long ago, she did again today.
She did take control of House Sinister. Is Dexter next? Will she succeed? Should she?
Then, I was powerless to stop her.
Now, the Eidolon is not such a crushing fear.
Should action be needed, I am able.
DON'T GET IN MY WAY

Because it is clear that the warrior god of Dexter has gone soft – Pyrem is no match for Ingra.
KRANNGK
KRANNNG

OH, MIGHTY ALTWAAL

NEVER HAS THE RESPONS BI..ITY YOU PLACED ON MY SHOULDERS BEEN SO WEIGHTY

DI..ARM VA..T

OR MY TASK BEEN SO CLEAR

O N.

OF THE SEVEN WEAPONS YOU HELD, I CAN ACCOUNT FOR ONLY THREE.

ALTHOUGH WRESTING YOUR ROD OF OFFICE FROM THE SIGIL-BEARER WHO POSSESSES IT COULD PROVE TROUBLESOME

AC\ \TE

NOW I FACE THE DREAD POSSIBILITY OF HAVING TO RAISE THE GAUNTLET AGAINST ONE OF MY OWN

AS YOU DID SO LONG AGO

DEATH IS THE CRUELEST SENTENCE--
--BUT IF IT MUST BE METED OUT--
--BEST IT BE DONE--
BY ME
INTERESTING
. . . YOU LAYING AS DE THE VOW OF PEACE FOR A PROBLEM CHILD PYREM
BUT FIRE AND EARTH MUST MEET AT LIFE'S TWILIGHT!
OR DO I REMEMBER T WRONG?
TO FREE ME THEY MUST!

IMPOSSIBLE IF YOU STRIKE ONE DOWN!
WELCOME, FRIENDS.
TODAY, IT BEGINS.
WE SECUNDAE WILL MARCH ON THE HIGH COUNCIL OF FIRST AND DEMAND A VOICE
WHAT IF THEY SIMPLY IGNORE US?
WE ARE TOO MANY TOO STRONG -
- IF THEY DENY US, WE WILL FIGHT
IT IS TIME!
WE HAVE BEEN OPPRESSED FOR TOO LONG KEPT YOUNG AND ISOLATED FROM THE POSITIONS OF POWER!
TODAY THAT ENDS.
YOU'VE WON THEM, SEAHN!
YES I HAVE, HAVEN'T I?
WE WILL RISE!
AND I KNOW THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN --

BECAUSE I'M GOING TO MAKE IT HAPPEN!
PYREM'S GO.NG TO GET H'S BUTT KICKED SO HARD MY FOOT .. BREAK HIS HOLY NOSE

EYYYAUGH!
THANK YOU ALL FOR ANSWERING MY CALL
KREETHUNK
NNNNNNHG!
ZZZWWWAP!
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TELL YOU
YOU'RE TRYING TO FIND ALTWAAL.
PERSHA, WE KNOW
LET HER TALK, TIENA --
MAYBE THERE'S SOME NEW PLACE SHE HASN'T FOUND HIM!
EMPHER!
TIENA!
LISTEN TO HER!

WNNNNNHG!
WHAAPT
YES, EMPHER -- LISTEN TO ME
HOLD A MOMENT, SHINNSA --
YOU'RE DISTRACTING ME
I FORGOT SHE WAS SO POWERFUL.
EXCUSES, EXCUSES --
PERSHA IS INGRAS CHILD, REMEMBER
THERE'S A LOT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT ME
SHE'S PYREM'S CHILD, TOO, AND GUESS WHO JUST WENT TO SEE HIM?
NO!
YOU DIDN'T!
WENT TO SEE HIM?
HOW?
YOU CAN'T CROSS THE RIFT
I CAN DO ANYTHING I LIKE
INCLUDING FINDING ALTWAA!
I WAS GOING TO ASK FOR YOUR IDEAS, BUT IF YOU'RE ALL GOING TO BE SO PISSY ABOUT IT
AIEEEEE!
WYTURE!

NOOOOO!
WHAT A SHRIEK
I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD YOU SHOUT BEFORE, WYTURE
WOW.
WHAT'S WRONG?
WYTURE
WYTURE!
OH?
I'M --
IT'S --
IT'S NOTHING
I THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING, BUT IT'S NOTHING
ENSON!
WYTURE?
INGRAS AT THE OBELISK!
THE KEY!
SHE MUSTN'T GET HER HANDS ON IT!
CALM YOURSELF WYTURE

YOU KNOW WE WON'T LET IT COME TO THAT
HEAR ME, ALTWAAL!
YOU LORDED OVER A COMBINED HOUSE!
WHEN I'M DONE, YOUR RULE WILL BE NOTHING BUT A PALE REFLECTION OF MY OWN!
DID YOU SPEAK TO MY DAUGHTER?
I CHALLENGE YOU TO SPEAK TO ME!

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Inks JOHN DELL & DREW GERACI • *Colors* ROB SCHWAGER • *Letters* DAVE LANPHEAR & TROY PETERI

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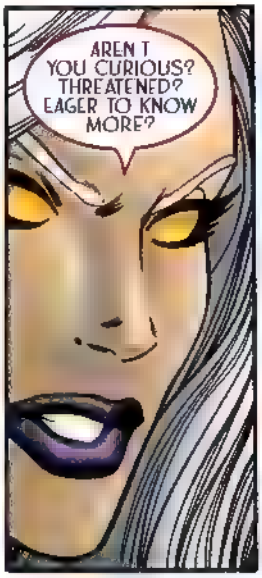
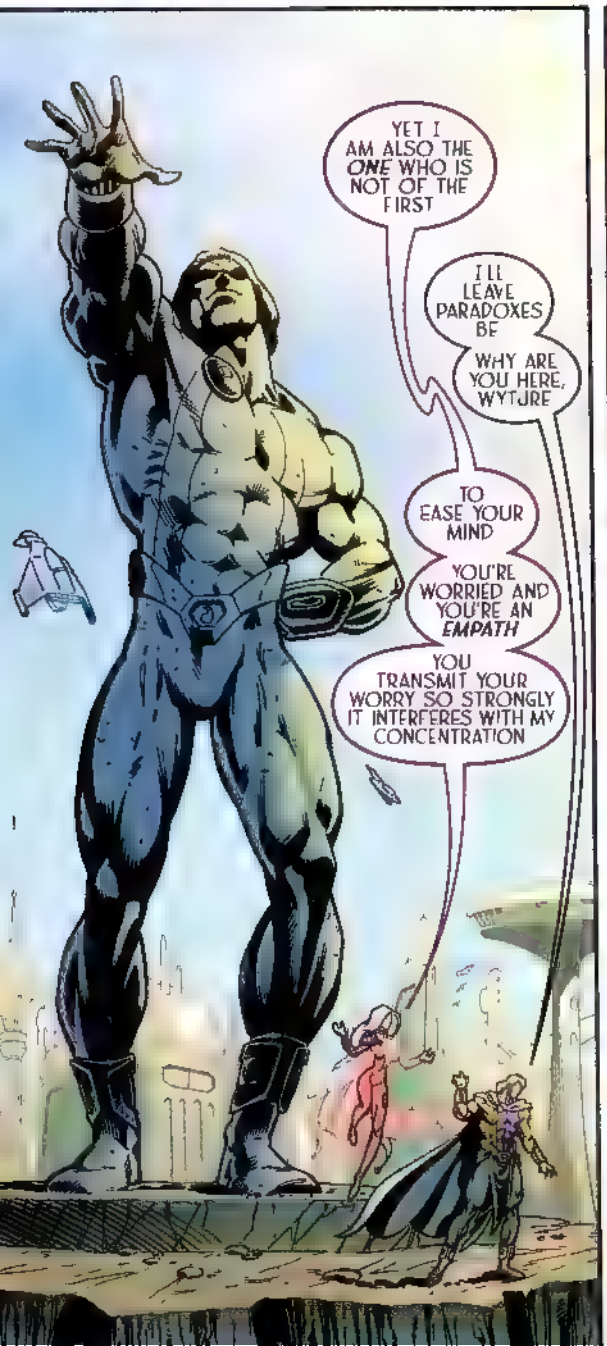
PYREM'S HALL OF WORLDS
GATEWAY TO AN INFINITE NUMBER OF PLACES
LIKE ME
SO MANY PLACES
SO MANY PEOPLE TO BE

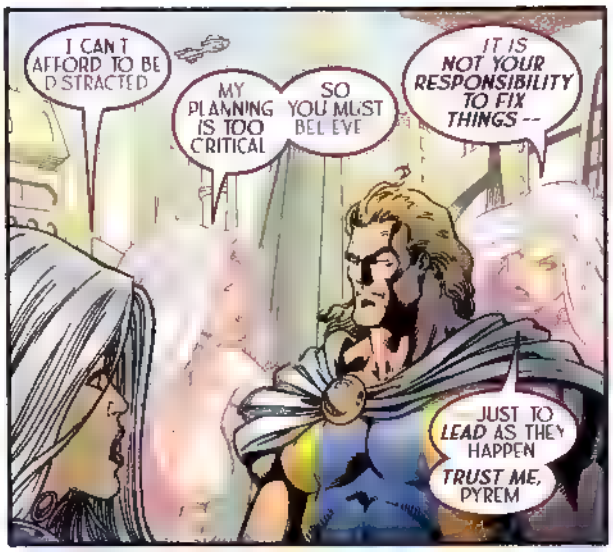
GREETINGS PYREM

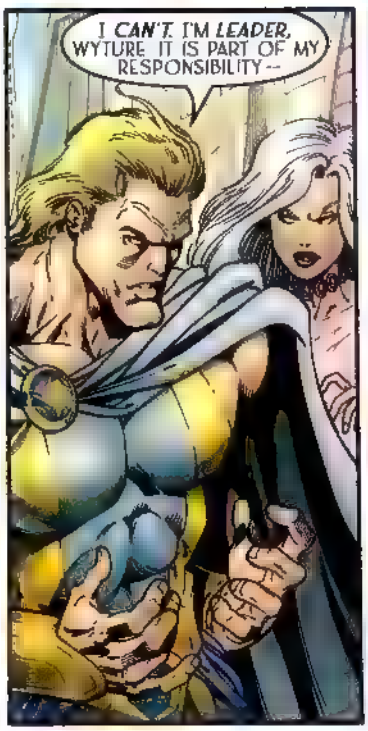
I DON'T LIKE RANDOM CHANCE
I PREFER MORE CONTROL OVER THE SITUATION
NOT LIKE YOU FIRST YOU SEEM CONTENT TO ALLOW SURPRISE TO ALTER THE GAME SIGIL-BEARERS APPEAR AND YOU DO NEARLY NOTHING


AREN'T YOU CURIOUS? THREATENED? EAGER TO KNOW MORE?

WYTURE ARE YOU *ANOTHER* ONE WHO IS NOT OF THE FIRST?
SILLY QUESTION, PYREM
YOU *KNOW* I'M SECUNDAE


YET I AM ALSO THE *ONE* WHO IS NOT OF THE FIRST
I'LL LEAVE PARADOXES BE
WHY ARE YOU HERE, WYTURE
TO EASE YOUR MIND
YOU'RE WORRIED AND YOU'RE AN *EMPATH*
YOU TRANSMIT YOUR WORRY SO STRONGLY IT INTERFERES WITH MY CONCENTRATION


I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE DISTRACTED
MY PLANNING IS TOO CRITICAL
SO YOU MUST BELIEVE
IT IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIX THINGS --
JUST TO *LEAD* AS THEY HAPPEN
TRUST ME, PYREM


I *CAN'T.* I'M *LEADER,* WYTURE. IT IS PART OF MY RESPONSIBILITY --

AS I SAID TO INGRA --
INGRA?
THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE YOUR AUTHORITY

YOU TWO RULE YOUR HOUSES VERY DIFFERENTLY--
--YOU SIT AMONG YOUR HIGH COUNCIL AND SHE STANDS ABOVE AND APART FROM HERS--
--BUT YOUR CONCERNS ARE SO SIMILAR
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY, PYREM
THERE IS A PURPOSE HIGHER THAN YOUR HOUSE AND YOUR SMALL TROUBLES THERE.
THERE IS MORE AWAITING ALL OF YOU
I NEED YOU TO GET READY!
HERE--
LET ME SHOW YOU
WYTLRE I'D LOVE TO BELIEVE YOU ARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE YOURSELF TO BE, BUT--
PLEASE, PYREM
JUST LOOK!
SEE

BUT HAVE GAINED IT

ONE DAY I WILL ASK YOU TO JOIN ME

I NEED YOUR SOUL TO KNOW WHY

I UNDERSTAND WYTURE

YOUR PURPOSE SO CLEAR

BUT IT'S FADING?

WHAT WAS IT YOU SAID WYTURE?

WYTURE?

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THE FIRST
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IN THE BEGINNING...

Just as she did centuries ago, Ingra informs Gannish that she intends to act and will tolerate no interference. Observed by Orium, Pyrem retrieves one of Altwaal's seven weapons, a gauntlet he fears he must use on Seahn. Seahn rallies his followers, readying for a confrontation with Pyrem. Persha shows that she's as much her powerful mother's child as she is peaceful Pyrem's, and Wyture is disturbed when Ingra lashes out at Altwaal's obelisk.

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I CAME TO THE ROCK THAT BEARS YOUR FACE HOPING FOR A MESSAGE, ALTWAA.., BUT YOU DENY ME.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOU DID NOT
CAN YOU HEAR ME ALTWAAL?
FEEL MY TOUCH?
NOTH NG?
THEN HEAR MY MESSAGE ALTWAAL --

I'LL WASTE NO MORE TIME ON A DEAD MAN!

YET I WITNESSED PERSHA SPEAKING OF RECEIVING CONFIRMATION OF YOUR EXISTENCE

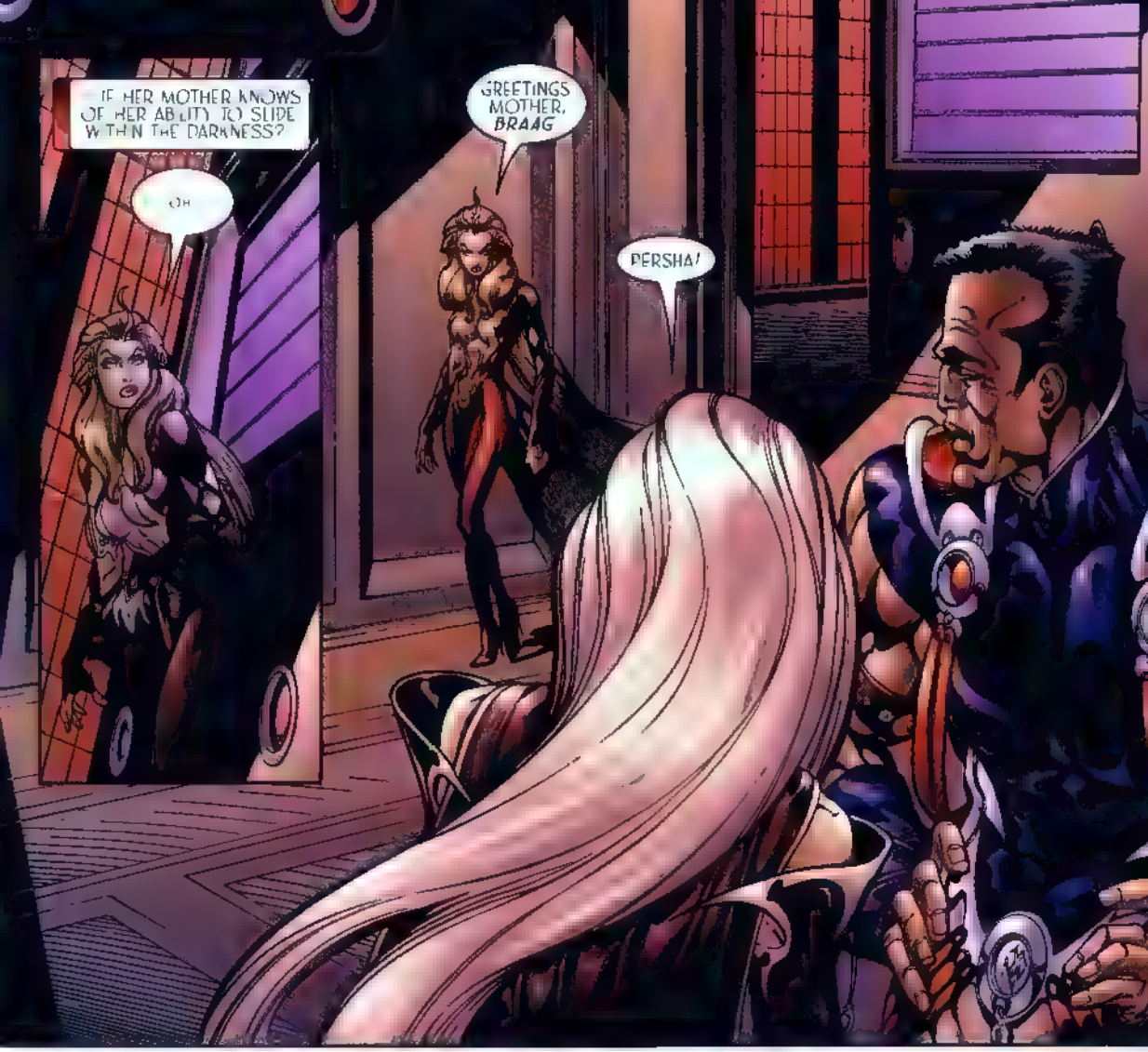
WHAT WORD FROM YOU CONVINCED HER THAT THIS IS SO?

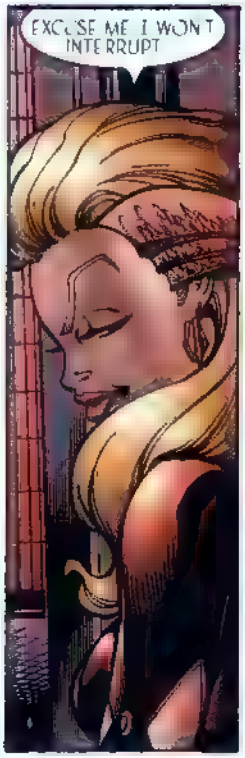
IF YOU LIVE ALTWAAL--

I WILL FIND YOU AND SEND YOU INTO LEGEND AGAIN
ELYSIA CANNOT HAVE *TWO* LEADERS
AND I DO NOT INTEND TO STEP ASIDE FOR ANYONE, MUCH LESS A GHOST
IT'S A DELICATE LITTLE WORLD. ITS RADIANCE IS ECLIPSED BY THAT OF OUR BEAUTIFUL ELYSIA. BUT AS I STEPPED FOOT ON ITS SOIL AND OBSERVED ITS INHABITANTS...

-- A TRUTH OF MONUMENTAL MPORTANCE WAS MADE KNOWN TO ME
PERSHA WHAT DO YOU GAIN BY COMING HERE?
ANSWERS! IF I CAN ONLY PROVE
IF I MAY CONTINUE ?
SORRY GANNISH
THE PEOPLE OF THAT SMALL WORLD -- WHO ARE MARKED WITH A TWO TAILED ORANGE SIGIL THAT DOES NOT MATCH THE TWO HOUSE SIGILS -- PREDATE THE FIRST
WE ARE TIED TO THEM IN SOME WAY YET UNCLEAR
BUT THEY ARE OLDER THAN WE
OLDER?!
GANNISH --!
THAT CANNOT BE!
YET TRUTH CAN'T BE HIDDEN FROM GANNISH
WHAT MORE DID YOU LEARN?
WILL YOU BE GOING BACK THERE?
SSSH!
WHY DO YOU KEEP SENDING GANNISH AWAY?
YALA I WAS JUST ASKING

CONSIDER THIS
AN OLDER RACE --
AN ORANGE MARK --
GANNISH MAY HAVE DISCOVERED THE HIDING PLACE OF ALTWAAL!
GANNISH -- THEY'RE CALLING COUNCIL -- TIME TO SEND ME BACK INTO THE EIDOLON MY LOVE
AND REMIND YOUR CURIOUS ACOLYTE THAT ALTWAAL IS BEST LEFT ALONE UNTIL HE CHOOSES TO RETURN
I'VE TOLD ALL I HAVE TO TELL I'LL SEE YOU BOTH ON YOUR WAY
WHERE SHALL I SEND YOU PERSHA?
YOU DON'T NEED TO SEND ME --
-- I HAVE MY OWN WAY
FAREWELL, FREN
I THOUGHT YOU ALONE GOVERNED ACCESS TO THIS PLACE --?
IT WOULD APPEAR LITTLE PERSHA HOLDS A BIG SECRET, LOVE
I WONDER


IF HER MOTHER KNOWS OF HER ABILITY TO SLIDE WITHIN THE DARKNESS?
OH
GREETINGS MOTHER, BRAAG
PERSHA!


EXCUSE ME I WON'T INTERRUPT

PERSHA!
COME BACK HERE!
I NEED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING

OH THAT CHILD!

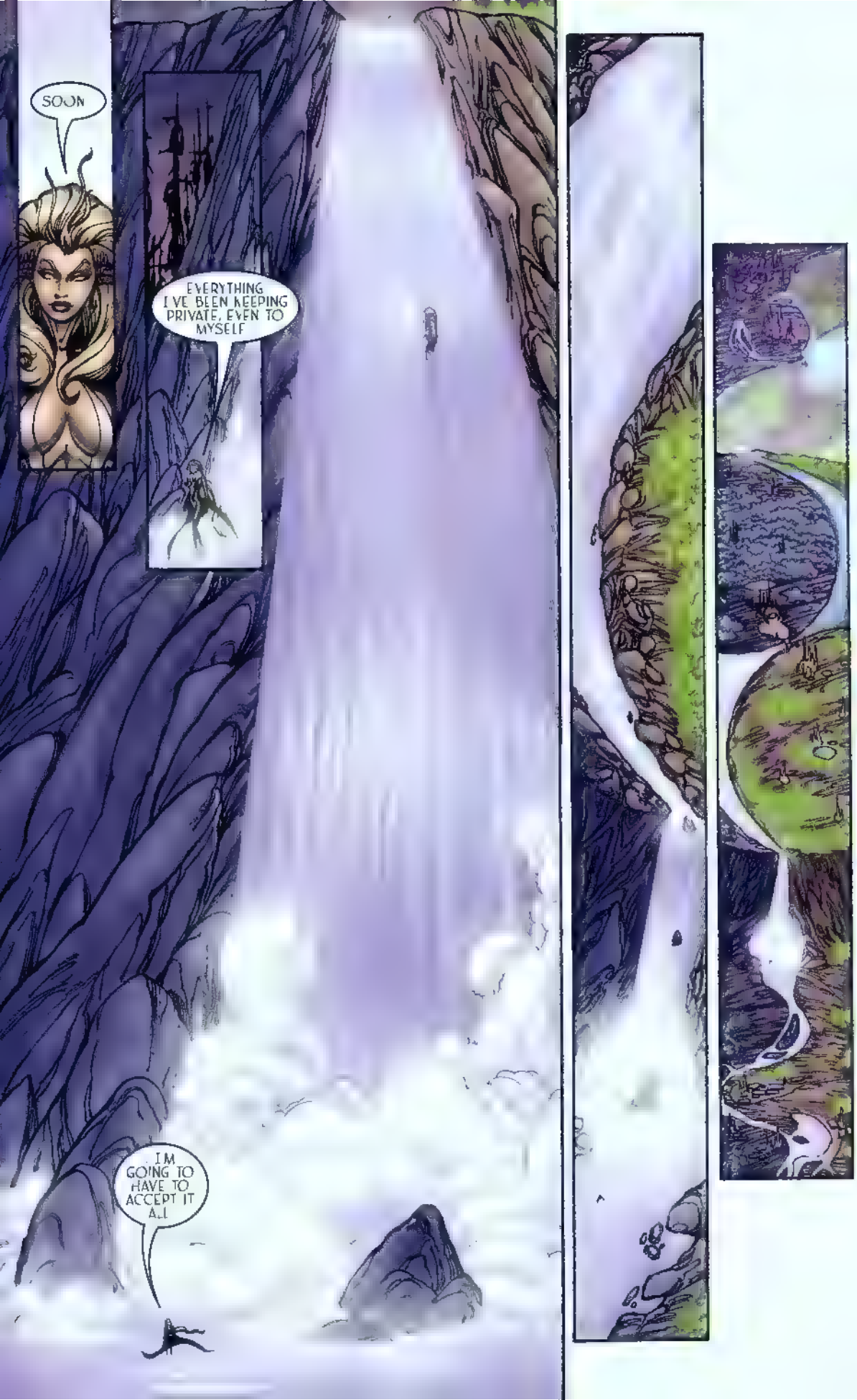
PERSHA?

GONE!
SHE'S GONE!
HOW DARE SHE --!
KIDS ACT UP
IT'S ABOUT TIME SHE STARTED DEFYING YOU!
BACK TO PLANS. JUST INVADE HOUSE DEXTER YOU SAY
BUT HOW? WE CROSS THE BRIDGE WE LOSE POWER. WE'RE TARGETS.
PERHAPS NOT
THE MORE I STUDY MY AGENT'S REPORTS OF HOW THE SIGIL-BEARERS MANIPULATE THE UNIVERSAL ENERGIES
THE MORE I'M CONVINCED THAT OUR POWER LOSS IS NOT A REAL PHENOMENON
BUT A SUGGESTION ALTWAAL PLANTED IN OUR MINDS
ALTWAAL WASN'T EVERYTHING HE'S MADE OUT TO BE
--HE WAS ONE OF US AFTER ALL--
WHICH WOULD MEAN THE TRUE POWER OF HIS WORDS LIES MORE IN SUGGESTION THAN FACT
ENOUGH ABOUT ALTWAAL!
WE CAN TAKE DOWN HOUSE DEXTER IN ONE MOVE, NGRA. AND YOU KNOW IT--
SNATCH PYREM, AND WATCH THE DEXTER WIMPS DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT HIM
PYREM--?
NO
THAT'S A FOOLISH IDEA BRAAG
PYREM'S NOT THAT VALUABLE TO THEM
PUT IT OUT OF YOUR MIND

SO -- THE STORIES ABOUT YOU TWO MEETING IN SECRET -- ARE MORE THAN JUST RUMORS?
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO SEE THE LEADER OF HOUSE DEXTER UNTIL AFTER I'VE TAKEN HIS ROLE!
NO MAN IS THAT IMPORTANT TO ME
YOU'D BE WISE TO REMEMBER THAT
OH, BUT I HAVEN'T THANKED YOU FOR OFFERING YOUR THOUGHTS, BRAAG
KEEP BRINGING YOUR IDEAS TO ME
I'LL ALWAYS APPRECIATE HEARING THEM FIRST
EVEN IF YOU WON'T LISTEN?
SEAHN?
YES, BRAAG?
YOU WERE RIGHT
WON'T SHE BE HAPPY WHEN WE BRING IN HIS HEAD
THEN IT'S UP TO ME TO BAIT THE TRAP

SORRY, MOTHER
BUT THE EIDOLON'S THE ONLY PLACE I CAN THINK
WITHOUT YOUR THOUGHTS GETTING IN THE WAY
ITS ENDLESS SHADOW GIVES ME PEACE BEING HERE ALONE LETS ME
WHO--?
WYTURE?
S THAT--?
JUST A TRICK OF THE STARLIGHT
BUT I DO NEED WYTURE'S COUNSE.

ALTHOUGH I ALREADY KNOW WHAT SHE L. SAY
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD DO, PERSHA?


SOON
EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN KEEPING PRIVATE, EVEN TO MYSELF
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ACCEPT IT A..L

THERE THEY SIT, ALL TEN OF THE HIGH COUNCIL, AND THEY RE NOT EVEN BOTHER NG TO WORRY
YOU DO SEEM TO BE THE SUBJECT OF THEIR CONVERSATION, SEAHN
DON T TEL ME YOU CAN PIERCE IHROE'S VEIL OF PR VACY?
I M GLAD YOU'RE ON MY TEAM ENSON
YOU D SCARE ME OTHERWISE
TH S S ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTAB E

SO NOW I'VE GOT TO GO DOWN THERE AND KNOCK THE TIRED OLD LEADER OF HOUSE DEXTER OFF HIS COUNCIL DAIS
DOESN'T ANYBODY ON THE COUNCIL REALIZE THIS HAS TO BE DONE?
THEY'RE TOO AFRAID OF WHAT CHANGE MIGHT DO TO THEM--
--AND I'VE GOT SOME BIG CHANGES PLANNED
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY'RE AFRAID OF CHANGE!
I'M AFRAID OF STAGNATION!
CHANGE IS THE COST OF NOT DYING UP AND DYING!
I'M CALLING THE TROOPS--
WE'RE GOING IN
GA ER.

MY SPIES TELL ME HE'S EVEN KILLED ALREADY!
HE'S OUT TO UNSEAT YOU, PYREM
HE'S WELCOME TO TRY
HE'D HAVE TO FACE ALL OF US TRENIN -- UNLESS YOUR HISTORY BINDS YOU TO PROTECT HIM?
PROTECT?
I'M THROUGH PROTECTING SEAHN!
I WISH I'D LET THE LITTLE TRAITOR ROT IN THE WOODS!
I TAKE NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIM NOW!
HIS BAD CHOICES ARE HIS OWN!
HE'S DANGEROUS, PYREM --
THE BOY'S AS VOLATILE AS THE GREEN FIRE HE WIELDS!
I CAN'T SNUFF OUT THIS FLAME WITHOUT CAUSE
BUT I CAN FOLLOW ORDERS.
GIVE ME THE WORD, PYREM

AND LET THE REST OF THE H GH COUNCIL BEAR WITNESS

ORDIAL REASH, YA. A ANTEM, SCHULLJN GAN! INDORIENNE RAAMIA -- WILL YOU SUPPORT ME IN THIS?

NO, TREN'N

PYREM ARE YOU SUGGESTING WE DO *NOTHING* ABOUT SEAHN?

NO, GANI HE WILL BE DEALT WITH

PYREM, WE'VE GOT TO STOP THIS REVOLT BEFORE HOUSE DEXTER ITSELF IS SPLIT N TWO.

SCHULLUN, IT'S GOOD FOR THE YOUNG TO REBEL -- IT'S PART OF GROWING UP

THE SECUNDAE WERE NOT CREATED ADULT AS WE WERE BUT EVEN *WE* HAVE MATURED

IT'S ALL PLAY-ACTING

TRY TO SEE THE DRAMA IN IT

WHAT YOU SEE AS SWEET RAAMIA

-- ALSO HAS A BITTER SIDE
PARDON THE INTERRUPTION
-- BUT SINCE YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ME --
MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO HEAR MY SIDE
LISTEN UP

PYREM --
YOU KNOW WHY I'M HERE
IT'S TIME FOR A RECKONING
OLD DOG, NEW DOG --
- LET'S SEE WHOSE FANGS ARE SHARPER

TO PUT IT MORE FORMALLY
WE THE SECUNDAE
--UNFAIRLY SUPPRESSED AND UNNATURALLY LIMITED
--HAVE COME TO CLAIM THE POWER AND PRIVILEGE THAT ARE OUR RIGHT AS YOUR SUCCESSORS
KEEP PUSHING, SEARN
WE WANT OUR SEAT AT THE TABLE
SHUT YOUR MOUTH, YOU UNGRATEFUL--!
HE IS ONE OF OUR OWN YALA. WE MUST LET HIM HAVE HIS SAY

I, SEAHN OF DEXTER, CHALLENGE YOU, PYREM OF DEXTER, FOR THE ROLE OF LEADER OF OUR HOUSE!

YOU MAY HAVE BEEN A GREAT WAR LEADER ONCE, PYREM BUT YOU'VE LOST IT!

ONE OF THE COUNCIL OF TEN

INGRA KNOWS HOW TO USE HER COUNCIL AS A LEADER SHOULD! HER TEN -- AND THERE ARE TEN NONE OF THIS I'M ONE OF YOU! TALK - SERVE HER!

DEXTER NEEDS A LEADER WHO KNOWS HOW TO LEAD, NOT SOME TIRED OLD HAS-BEEN!

YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE FIT TO LEAD US?

GROW UP, SEAHN!

WHAT?

GROW OLD LIKE YOU, YOU MEAN?

I CAN'T!

YOU ANCIENTS HAVE SEEN TO THAT!

YOU WANT AUTHORITY?

EARN IT

IN YOUR EYES? IF I WAIT THAT LONG WE'RE ALL DEAD OR DID YOU FORGET WE'VE GOT SIGIL-BEARERS DOWN THERE PLOTTING TO DESTROY US?
I'M NOT EARNING IT-- I PLAN TO TAKE IT
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE USING IT, MISTER. LET'S NEGOTIATE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION WHILE THEY FRY OUR BUTTS!
NOT HERE SEAHN. NOT NOW
TOMORROW, THEN
I'LL BE IN THE EIDOLON WHEN THE SUN REACHES ZENITH
BE THERE
THAT I WILL
OH NO, YOU WON'T! THIS IS INTOLERABLE!
SEAHN'S A DEAD MAN!
I'LL KILL HIM MYSELF!
NO, YALA
LEAVE THAT TO ME

Barbara
KESEL
WRITER
Bart
SEARS
PENCILER
Andy
SMITH
INKER
Michael
ATIYEH
COLORIST
Dave
LANPHEAR
with TROY PETERI
LETTERERS
The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa
Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
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Vice President
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Chris Oarr
Director of
Sales & Marketing
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Director of Marketing
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Director of Corporate
Communications
Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
Brandon Peterson
Art Director
Bart Sears
Assistant Art Director
Pam Davies
Production Director
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Design Director
Troy Peteri
Design Assistant
Michelle Pugliese
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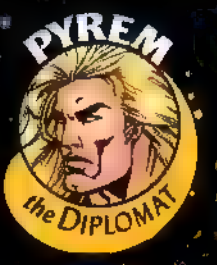
HOUSE SINISTER

HOUSE DEXTER

House Sinister's Leader, ***Ingra***, is currently scheming to take over House Dexter and reunite the Houses under her rule. Her daughter (by Pyrem) ***Persha*** seeks out Altwaal, the first Leader of all First, hoping to convince him to return and reunite the Houses. ***Pyrem*** tries to keep the peace in House Dexter, complicated by an insurrection of the Secundae (naturally-born children of the First) led by ***Seahn***, who has made an ally of Ingra. Pyrem has determined that he must sacrifice Seahn and has retrieved one of the legendary seven weapons of Altwaal for that purpose. He is secretly observed by mad ***Orium***. ***Gannish*** puzzles over his discovery (shared with Persha and his lover ***Yala***) that the Atlanteans of Earth are older than the First – but didn't the First create everything else? And ***Trenin*** grates as Seahn – whom he brought to Elysia as a boy – challenges Pyrem before Dexter's High Council. Pyrem and his would-be replacement agree to meet in the Eidolon...



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I MUST GO ALONE YALA
I GAVE MY WORD
IF I ALLOW MY HONOR TO FAIL I WILL NO LONGER BE WORTHY TO LEAD HOUSE DEXTER
WE HAVE NONE WORTHIER, PYREM. THAT'S NOT A REASONABLE EXCUSE FOR REFUSING MY COMPANY
WHAT ABOUT SEAHN?
AFTER YESTERDAY'S CHALLENGE, I DOUBT THERE'S MUCH HIS HONOR WILL DENY HIM
YOU'RE WALKING INTO A TRAP
BEARING ALTWAAL'S WEAPON
WHAT?
YALA - YOUR FRIENDSHIP AND COUNSEL MEAN MUCH TO ME, BUT I MUST SEE THIS THROUGH ALONE
SINCE IT IS YOUR NATURE TO SEEK ESCALATION OF CONFLICT, I MUST FORBID YOU TO JOIN ME
PYREM!
PYREM!

WELCOME TO THE EIDOLON!

THANKS FOR SHOWING UP OLD MAN

YOU KNOW THAT I'VE GATHERED SOME LIKE MINDED FRIENDS -- OTHER SECOND-BORN WHO WANT TO BE OUT FROM UNDER THE CHOKING CONTROL OF YOU FIRST-BORN!

WE WANT *EQUALITY* YOU'RE HOLDING OUT

YOU SECUNDAE HAVE *NOT* BEEN DENIED, SEAHN

YOU ARE SIMPLY STILL TOO YOUNG

THIS DISPLAY OF YOURS IS NOTHING MORE THAN ADOLESCENT STRUTTING

LEAVE OFF NOW AND I'LL--

TOO LATE!

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT SECUNDAE VERSUS FIRST LEADER OF DEXTER--

--IT'S SO MUCH BIGGER THAN THAT!

SEAHN'S SECUNDAE ARE JOINED BY ALLIES FROM *MY* HOUSE!

CAN DEXTER'S LEADER STAND AGAINST THE REBELLION OF BOTH DEXTER *AND* SINISTER?

YOU MAY BE SURPRISED AT THE ANSWER --

FOR THIS IS ALTWAAL'S GAUNTLET OF VICTORY--
--AND I AM NO STRANGER TO WAR!

IGNORE THE WEAPON!
SO IT MAKES HIM MORE POWERFUL--
--WE'RE POWERFUL TOO!
GET HIM!
SEAHN, IT'S SUICIDE TO FACE ONE OF THE SEVEN WEAPONS!
YOU HEARD WHAT THAT ROD DID TO THE DEXTER WRETCH KERSPAN!
IT'S JUST A MAGNIFIER OF HIS OWN ENERGY, RIGHT?
PYREM IS POWERFUL-- BUT EVEN IF HIS MIGHT IS MAGNIFIED, OUR NUMBERS WILL GIVE US THE ADVANTAGE!
PYREM IS NOTHING BUT A GELDED FORMER WARRIOR--
HE'S GOT NO TRUE FIRE LEFT!
GET HIM!

GNNNNF!

BRING ME YOUR WORST -- I'LL STILL BE STANDING WHEN YOU'RE DONE!

IT BURNS!

LEEEYYAUGH!

THIS IS RIDICULOUS!

WE'RE HAVING OUR ASSES HANDED TO US BY ONE FROM THE FEEBLE HOUSE OF DEXTER!

MOST OF YOU WERE BORN *AFTER* THE WARS

YOU HAVE NO CLUE HOW TO TURN A BATTLE TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!

YOU'VE CEDED CONTROL OF THE FIELD!

HERE IN THE EIDOLON, PERHAPS

BUT IS THAT AS TRUE ON A WORLD OF *OUR* CHOOSING?

A FRAGILE ONE TEEMING WITH GENTLE CREATURES
ONES WHOSE AGONY YOU WILL FEEL?"
A CRUEL BUT CLEVER CHOICE
FORGIVE ME FRIEND-- IF THIS WAS ONLY A GAME BETWEEN HOUSES I'D END IT
BUT SOMETHING MORE IS BREWING
SOMETHING DEADLY
IF ITS FESTERING POWER IS NOT ACKNOWLEDGED AND PURGED, IT WILL GROW INTO A CANCER AND CONSUME US ALL FROM WITHIN
THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID THAT FATE IS TO INVITE IT!

AM I TO BE THE AGENT OF YOUR DEATHS?
DESIST!
YOU DON'T GIVE THE ORDERS HERE, PYREM
AND I DON'T TAKE THEM!
BRAAG, HOW DID YOU GET INGRA TO LET YOU OUT OF YOUR CAGE TO PLAY?
YOU THINK YOU'RE FUNNY?
YOU WOULDN'T BE STANDING NOW IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE HIS WEAPON --
BUT I DO, BRAAG
AND I AM

BRAAG, BRAAG
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF SUBTLETY?
YOU CAN DRAIN AN OPPONENT'S ENERGY STORES WITHOUT OPENING YOURSELF UP TO ATTACK
WAIT!
WHAT
LET A MASTER SHOW YOU HOW TO TRANSFER POWER FROM THE UNW[illegible]NG!
[illegible]KE SO!
OH, THAT'S IMPRESSIVE--

YOU MADE IT *RAIN*
WELL *DONE*, GREAT *MASTER* — CARE TO WASTE MY TIME ON THE CREATION OF ANY *OTHER* FORMS OF WEATHER?
JUST *AIR*, SEAHN
PYREM IS SURPRISINGLY CONNECTED TO THE AIR
WHICH *MUST* BE WHAT YOUR HEAD IS *FULL* OF IF YOU THOUGHT A LITTLE *FIREBALL* WOULD STOP HIM
WHY DON'T YOU KEEP WATCHING AS *MY* PLAN FOR TODAY'S HUNT UNFOLDS.
WITH SO MANY OF US HOUNDING HIM
OUR STAG HAS NO CHOICE
BUT TO RUN HIMSELF TO DEATH - *HEY!*
WHERE'S HE GOING?
FOLLOW HIM!

NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO, DESTRUCT ON WILL FOLLOW
YOU CAN T HARM THIS WORLD'S LIFE!
OH? WATCH US
WATCH? I D RATHER PLAY
YOU WERE DOING QUITE WELL, PYREM
BUT YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT ME
I CAN T RESIST A BATTLE

I ORDERED YOU TO STAY AWAY!
AND I DEFIED THAT ORDER
LET'S GET YOU HOME
NO
YALA, YOU GO HOME
PLEASE
WHY?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HIS CHOICE
CAN'T YALA HELP HIM ESCAPE?
HE'LL BE CAPTURED, IF NOT KILLED!
WYTURE!
I CAN SEE WHAT HE'S THINKING, BUT IT MAKES NO SENSE!
WHY WOULD ONE MAN, FINDING HIMSELF UP AGAINST OUR FORCES, REFUSE HELP WHEN SO OVERWHELMED?
BECAUSE IT'S NOT ABOUT THE BATTLE, PERSHA-- IT'S ABOUT THE BIGGER WAR!
KEEP WATCHING
THERE'S CONFLICT RAGING BETWEEN AND WITHIN THE TWO HOUSES, YALA
IF THE TURMOIL INSTIGATED BY SEAHN IS NOT RESOLVED, THERE WILL BE ESCALATION
WAR
WE'LL BE TRAPPED WITHIN THE OLD WAYS OF BATTLE AND BLOOD
I HAVE TO SOLVE THIS
SURELY NOT BY FIGHTING HOUSE SINISTER ON YOUR OWN?
ARE YOU COMPLETELY WITLESS?
YALA, I AM THE LEADER AND YOU WILL BOW TO MY WILL IN THIS MATTER!
NOW, GO!
FINE!
I'LL BE SURE TO ATTEND YOUR REMEMBRANCE!
IT WON'T COME TO THAT YALA
I KNOW THE BOY TOO WELL

SEAHN!
SEND THE OTHERS AWAY
THIS IS BETWEEN *US* -- YOU WILL ONLY KNOW WHO IS THE STRONGER IF WE *KEEP* IT BETWEEN THE TWO OF US!
OH, NO, PYREM --
THIS ISN'T BETWEEN YOU AND ME -- IT'S BETWEEN *US!*
HOUSE DEXTER AND HOUSE SINISTER!
SEAHN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HE'S CLAIMING HOUSE SINISTER?
NO, NO, GRACOS -- HE'S BLUFFING!
WITHIN THE THRILL OF HIS DEFIANCE, HE ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRUTH
YOU *NEVER* REALLY THOUGHT I WAS A SON OF DEXTER, DID YOU?

THEN YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE
YOUR EXECUTION
--WON'T BE A PRIVATE MATTER
STOP.
IF YOU ARE TO KILL SEAHN, PYREM, YOU MUST DO IT WITHOUT FALSE ADVANTAGE.
ALTWAALS WEAPON OF JUSTICE MUST REMAIN--
HMMM.
--IN OTHER HANDS

HE'S POWERLESS!
GET HIM!
UNKH!
I'M STILL YOUR BETTER EVEN WITHOUT THE ADVANTAGE OF ALTWAAL'S GAUNTLET!
YOU'RE NO GREATER THAN US, PYREM.
HOW DARE YOU, C'AM TO CAUSE OUR DEATHS!
THIS IS THE PRICE OF HOLDING BACK THE SECUNDAE, LEADER OF DEXTER
AND IT'S A PLEASURE TO MAKE YOU PAY!
UNG!
NEVER SAW WHAT NGRA SAW IN YO
USE YOUR FIRE! FINISH HIM, SEAHN!
GYAAAH!
THIS IS THE PRICE OF UNDER-ESTIMATING ME!
I'M NOT GUILTY OF OVERSIGHT SEAHN
ONLY OF SHOWING COMPASS ON TO TU...TY'S WHELP
STOP!
INGRA?
YOU WOULD SAVE ME?

HOW DARE YOU!
IMPETUOUS FOOLS!
SEAHN WHAT POSSESSED YOU TWO TO ENTRAP PYREM?
DID YOU THINK I WOULD REMAIN UNAWARE?
BRAAG -- DID YOU THINK YOU COULD HIDE A TRAP FIT ONLY FOR AN EMPATH FROM MY NOTICE?
YOU WOULD ENDANGER MY SCHEMING FOR THIS?
I AM SICKENED BY YOUR STUPIDITY!
IF YOU TWO DIDN'T FIGURE STRONGLY INTO MY PLANS TO REUNITE ELYSIA, YOU'D NOW BE DUST AMONG THE DEAD
LISTEN CAREFULLY -- FROM THIS MOMENT ON DO NOT OPERATE, DO NOT PLAN, DO NOT THINK WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE AND PERMISSION
THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER WARNING!
WELL... THAT WAS HARSH
T'S INGRA
YOU'VE GOT TO EXPECT THAT
POINT
YOU WERE REALLY GOOD OUT THERE KID
WE HAD HIM
THANKS -- BUT I TOLD YOU PYREM WOULD WALK RIGHT IN -- YOU JUST HAD TO HAVE THE TROOPS READY WENT LIKE PERFECT.
IT WAS A GREAT PLAN
YEAH GREAT --
BUT, SEAHN - YOU COME TO ME WITH ANY OTHER GREAT PLANS THAT DROP ME IN INGRA'S GRACES AND YOU'RE A DEAD MAN
OH?
DON'T YOU FORGET WHOSE HANDS WERE EXTINGUISHING PYREM'S LIFE FORCE --

--YOU MAY HAVE TRAPPED HIM BUT I'M THE ONE OF US WHO CAN KILL HIM
SEND
DESPAIR
PAIN
ANGUISH
sorrow
AGONY
FEAR
DISILLUSIONMENT
TERROR
GYAAAH!
disappointment
PAIN

IT'S A SIMPLE IDEA REALLY
TO TRAP AN EMPATH --
-- MAKE HIM FEEL TOO MUCH TO THINK CLEARLY
INGRA
WHY AM I HERE?
WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
SO I COULD SEE YOU AGAIN --
AS YOU WERE
THERE -- IT'S NOT RIGHT TO LEAVE DEXTER'S LEADER SO RUDELY INJURED
YOU'RE SHIELDING ME. I CAN THINK
NOT FOR LONG ENOUGH TO FULLY RECOVER FROM THE ENERVATION OF CROSSING THE RIFT INTO SINISTER
I'M NOT THAT FOOLHARDY
YOU'RE NOT FOOLHARDY AT ALL
YOU NEVER WERE

YOU ALWAYS WERE THE MOST AMAZING BEING I HAVE EVER KNOWN
PYREM I--
I CAN'T--
DON'T--
I AM LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER!
YOU'RE MY PRISONER!
I CANNOT BE SWAYED BY SUCH A CLUMSY ATTEMPT AT SEDUCTION
YOU'LL REMAIN TRAPPED UNTIL I DETERMINE OTHERWISE!
VERY WELL
SINCE I'M LIKELY TO BE A WHILE, MAY I SEE MY DAUGHTER WHILE I'M HERE?
WHA -?
WHEN DID YOU--?
NO!
NO, YOU MAY NOT SEE YOUR DAUGHTER!
YOU ARE A HOSTAGE HERE, NOT A GUEST!

HOW...HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN?
NOT LONG
I WISH I'D KNOWN SOONER IT MIGHT HAVE CHANGED SO MANY THINGS
I WOULDN'T HAVE CHANGED A THING! WE
WE BOTH--
HAVE OUR DESTINIES
WE CAN'T--
INGRA, OUR DESTINIES ARE ENTWINED THROUGH OUR DAUGHTER
DON'T YOU FEEL IT?
NO!
NO, WE'RE NOT--DON'T YOU DARE TELL ME WE'RE CONNECTED IN ANY WAY!
BUT WE ARE, INGRA, AND PERSHA
--OUR DAUGHTER--
--IS THE EVIDENCE
SILENCE!
YOU ARE MY PRISONER AND YOU WILL REMAIN SO UNTIL HOUSE DEXTER IS MINE
YOU ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION NO LONGER!
GYAAH!
PERSHA IS MY DAUGHTER PYREM
MINE!
AND YOU CAN NEVER BE MINE AGAIN

Barbara
KESEL
WRITER
Andrea
DI VITO
PENCILER
Rob
HUNTER
INKER
Rob
SCHWAGER
COLORIST
Dave
LANPHEAR
with TROY PETERI
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Mark Alessi
Publisher & CEO
Gina M. Villa
Chief Operating Officer
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Tony Panaccio
Vice President
Product Development
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Production Control
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Barbara Kesel
Head Writer
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Art Director
Pam Davies
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ALTWAALS GAUNTLET-- THE MAGNIFIER OF POWER
ENSON LET ME TAKE IT, WYTURE WHY?
I CAN'T ESCAPE THE FEELING THAT YOU KNOW HIS REASON WHY IS THAT?
BUT, PERSHA --
-- YOU WERE THE ONE DRAWN TO THE GAUNTLET

HIS GAUNTLET IS THE KEY TO FINDING ALTWAAL HIMSELF, I'M SURE OF IT
I DON'T KNOW WHY THIS IS *SO* IMPORTANT TO ME, WYTURE--I'M CAUGHT IN A COMPULSION ALMOST AS STRONG AS THOSE CAST BY KAHMBAL--BUT I TRULY BELIEVE ALTWAAL *MUST* BE SUMMONED!
IF THE FIRST ARE NOT BROUGHT TOGETHER AGAIN--
--IT WON'T *MATTER* IF MOTHER CONQUERS BOTH HOUSES
--WE'LL *ALL* CEASE TO BE!
THIS WEAPON HAS THE POWER TO AUGMENT MY SIGHT!
WITH IT, I CAN FIND HIM.
BUT THERE'S ALWAYS A PRICE FOR THE POWER
IT WAS ONE OF ALTWAAL'S WEAPONS THAT COST KERSPAN HIS LIFE
WYTURE I'M ASHAMED TO ADMIT...I'M AFRAID

YOU ARE *NOT* KERSPAN, PERSHA
HE WAS INDULGING HIS OWN WOUNDED PRIDE
YOU ARE SAVING US ALL

IF I'M RIGHT
IF I'M NOT, I'M JUST INDULGING MY CURIOSITY
BUT IT MUST BE DONE
LET ME SEE THIS WEAPON'S MASTER!

I SEE HIM!
BUT -- WYTURE, ALTWAAL WASN'T THE LAST TO USE THE GAUNTLET!
IT'S GUIDING ME TO PYREM!
HE DIDN'T GET AWAY! I THOUGHT -- NO, I ASSUMED -- BUT HOW COULD HE HAVE ESCAPED?
I TOOK THE WEAPON HE NEEDED TO DO IT!
I HAVE TO HELP HIM!
PYREM?
PER PERSHA?
YES, PYREM I'M SORRY--I DIDN'T MEAN TO
--WHERE ARE YOU?

I DON'T KNOW
SOMEWHERE HAS TO BE. IN SINISTER. I'M WEAK
AND INGRA CAME TO ME
MOTHER KNOWS
THERE ARE SHADOWS I COULD COME TO YOU BUT I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE YOU AWAY WITH ME THROUGH --
NO!
THEN BOTH
TRAPPED
PERSHA BREAK CONTACT
STAY AWAY
NO! I WON'T ABANDON YOU!
TOO DANGEROUS

YOU DON'T MAKE A FITTING MARTYR, PYREM
I GAIN NOTHING BY YOUR DEATH
YES, I AM
WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, I'LL SEND YOU BACK TO *YOUR* SIDE OF THE CITY--
AFTER ALL, ELYSIA IS REUNITED UNDER *MY* RULE!

IS SHE BLIND?
THAT'S IT -- UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL
DON'T BE AFRAID, PERSHA -- YOU KNOW IT'S TIME.
I'M SO TIRED OF WAITING FOR HER TO REALIZE THE OBVIOUS -
INGRA LOVES PYREM
PYREM LOVES INGRA
BUT THEY'RE HEADS OF RIVAL HOUSES SO THEY FEEL OBLIGATED TO POSTURE THEIR HATRED TO ANYONE WHO'LL LISTEN!
I KNOW THEM BOTH FROM THE INSIDE!
I KNOW EVERYONE BETTER THAN THEY DO THEMSELVES
WE ALL FACE A THREAT FROM THE WORLDS BELOW WE MUST BE UNITED TO SURVIVE IT!
SHE JUST NEEDS A LITTLE HELP

WYTURE, I'VE SEEN THROUGH HER EYES SINCE I WAS BORN, BUT I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND HOW SHE CAN HIDE THE TRUTH FROM HERSELF!
MY MOTHER IS ONE OF THE FIRST CREATED, ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL, BUT SHE'S ALSO SO *LIMITED!*
IF PYREM REMAINS A HOSTAGE, HIS PRESENCE WILL CONTINUE TO DRAW MOTHER TO HIS SIDE
SHE THINKS SHE HAS NO WEAKNESSES, BUT HAVING PYREM HERE MIGHT CAUSE HER CONTROL TO SLIP...
..IF WE CAN UNITE *THEM*, IT MIGHT NOT MATTER IF ALTWAAL CAN BE FOUND
ALTHOUGH IT MEANS GETTING THE MIGHTY INGRA TO COOPERATE!
MUCH AS I HATE TO SEE PYREM SUFFER, IT'S BEST IF HE REMAINS A PRISONER FOR NOW
BEST IF HE ISN'T RESCUED
OH, TRENIN.

HOW LOYAL A FRIEND ARE YOU? ARE THERE PLANS TO FREE PYREM? LET ME SEE
BY THE BLIGHTED EYES, YALA, WHAT POSSESSED YOU TO *ABANDON* HIM THERE!
HE *COMMANDED* ME TO GO, TRENIN! HE DIDN'T WANT TO ESCAPE!
A FEW POUNDINGS FROM THE UNITED TRIBES OF SEAHN AND BRAAG WILL BE THE PRICE OF *THAT* BIT OF PRIDE
I KNEW MY RETURN HERE WOULD GIVE *YOU* THE TRAIL WHILE I SUMMON MY ARMIES --
FOR WHAT?
WAR?
DON'T YOU REALIZE *THAT'S* WHAT WILL COME OF ATTACKING IN RETURN?

OR DID THE THOUGHT OF BATTLE MAKE YOU TOO EXCITED TO THINK?
YOU TWO ARE MY OLDEST FRIENDS YALA, BUT PYREM SHOULD *NOT* HAVE GONE AND YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE *LET* HIM!
AND *YOU* SHOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT YOUR BOY OUT OF THE FOREST -- THAT BRAT *SEAHN'S* AT THE HEART OF THIS MESS!
ALTWAAL'S EYES!
I AM SO SICK OF THAT RUMOR!
SEAHN'S *NOT* MY CHILD YALA!
KRRRAAAK
AND IF *YOU* HADN'T FLED PYREM'S SIDE --
I'D HAVE BEEN CAPTURED ALONG WITH HIM AND NOT HERE PREPARING HIS RESCUE!
OR WASTING BREATH FIGHTING A WAR OF ACCUSATIONS!
I'LL ALERT IHROE, GATHER EVERYONE CURRENTLY IN ELYSIA, THEN --
NO! WE CAN'T GO ROARING IN!
SPLENDID STRATEGY -- DO NOTHING?
I GO!
JUST ME!
NO, YOU *DON'T!*

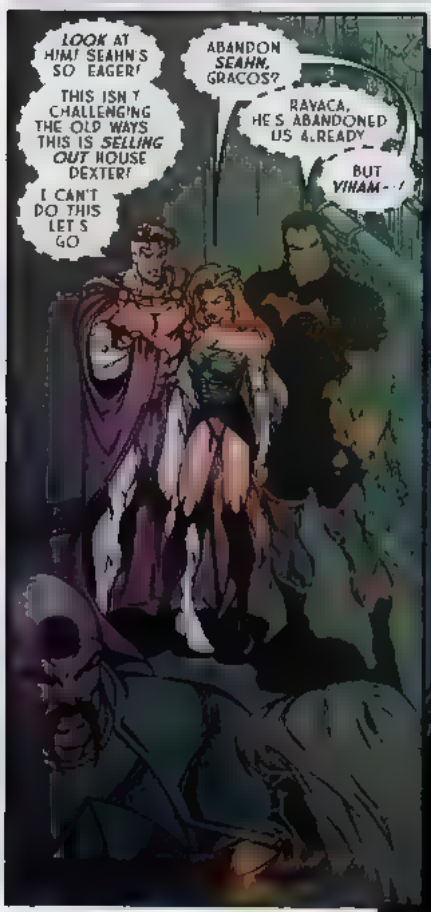
JUST US, OLD FRIEND -
WE GO

THEY'RE COMING FOR HIM, WYTURE, BUT HOW CAN THEY HOPE TO SUCCEED WITH JUST *TWO*?
THEY'LL LOSE ALL POWER WHEN THEY CROSS THE RIFT
THEY'LL THINK OF A WAY
TRUST ME
WE CAN OFFER SOME SUBTLE IMPEDIMENTS IF THEY COME TOO CLOSE TO SUCCESS
LIKE *SEAHN*
HAVE YOU LOOKED IN ON HIM SINCE HIS VICTORY?
I'VE AVOIDED SEAHN.
THERE'S SUCH AN ENDLESS *DARKNESS* TO HIM
BUT *YOU* ARE ALLIED TO SHADOW
TRUE
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING DANGEROUS ABOUT A MAN WHO DOESN'T KNOW WHO HE IS
ALTHOUGH HE KNOWS WHAT HE *WANTS*.
HIS DESIRES ARE ALWAYS *STRONG*.
YOU GOTTA LOVE THIS

PYREM, DEXTER'S BELOVED LEADER, TRAPPED IN THE KEEP OF HIS GREATEST RIVAL, BRAAG THE ENGINEER!
HIGH DRAMA, THAT
GOTTA ADMIT IT, BRAAG - I'M IMPRESSED
THIS IS ONE NICE TRAP
THE EMPATH FEELS THE PAIN THEY SEND HIM, CAN'T THINK OF A WAY OUT
PERFECTION
HOW'D YOU GET THE SENSITIVES TO COOPERATE?
FEAR
INGRA'S NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH INFLUENCE IN OUR HOUSE, SEAHN
SPEAKING OF INFLUENCE, INGRA WAS TORQUED ABOUT US GRABBING PYREM, BUT YOU'LL NOTICE SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE IN ANY HURRY TO SEND HIM BACK. SHE TRUSTS MY GOOD IDEAS.
I'VE GOT HER SO WRAPPED
SHE JUST LOVES ME
SEAHN, INGRA HAS MANY LOVES.
DON'T BE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO ASSUME YOU'RE HER ONLY INTEREST
I'M NO FOOL
IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME ONCE INGRA GIVES HERSELF TO ME --
FOOLISH, BUT NOT STUPID. NOT YET
THERE'S AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FOOLISH AND STUPID.
FOOLISH IS NOT KNOWING ANY BETTER
STUPID IS KNOWING BETTER BUT DOING IT ANYWAY

YOU AND INGRA, THAT S FOOLISH. YOU THINKING SHE CARES ONLY FOR YOU, THAT'S FOOLISH. PLANNING TO COME OUT OF THIS AT HER SIDE, THAT S FOOL SH
SO US NOT TELLING HER WE'D MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO CAPTURE PYREM WAS FOOLISH?
NO, THAT WAS *STUPID*, BUT THAT S GENERALLY HOW I END UP LOOKING WHEN INGRA S INVOLVED

NOT AFTER THIS!
I KNOW DEXTER'S FORCES! THEY'LL SEND AN ARMY--EVERYONE THAT'S WHAT I'D DO!
THIS WILL BE THE GREATEST BATTLE IN THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST AND IT WILL CHANGE EVERY-THING!
THE SECUNDAE WILL RISE!
EQUALITY WILL BE OURS!
AS ONE WHO'S OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE WARS--
--REIN IT IN, SEAHN
YOU'LL NEED THAT ENERGY


LOOK AT HIM! SEAHN'S SO EAGER!
THIS ISN'T CHALLENGING THE OLD WAYS THIS IS SELLING OUT HOUSE DEXTER!
I CAN'T DO THIS LET'S GO
ABANDON SEAHN, GRACOS?
RAVACA, HE'S ABANDONED US ALREADY
BUT VIHAM--!

SHHH
WE HAVE TO FIND THE GATE AND CROSS THE EIDOLON WITH WHAT LITTLE POWER WE HAVE LEFT--
--WITHOUT ATTRACTING ATTENTION

SEAHN.
I'M SORRY.
TO HAVE YOUR FRIENDS DESERT YOU IN YOUR GREATEST HOUR MUST--
WHAT, ENSON--?

DESER--
WHAT?

OH, NO
SORRY
BUT IT'S JUST NOT GOING TO BE THIS WAY
SEAHN! LET US GO!
SEAHN!
GLLRK!
YOU ARE NOT GOING TO RUN OUT ON ME!
YOU ARE MY FRIENDS AND YOU'RE BETRAYING THAT FRIENDSHIP BY RUNNING!

YOU'RE BETRAYING OUR HOUSE, SEAHN!
NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO PROVOKE HIM, GRACOS SEAHN'S A LITTLE UNAPPROACHABLE RIGHT NOW
A . TTLE?
I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THIS!
WHAT UNGRATEFUL ALLIES...I THOUGHT THEY WERE YOUR FRIENDS
I DO ALL THE WORK TO GIVE ALL SECUNDAE A BETTER SHOT AT POWER AND MY CLOSEST FRIENDS ARE THE FIRST ONES TO WALK OUT ON ME?
IS THIS HOW HOUSE DEXTER SUPPORTS ITS OWN?
DEXTER? YET YOU STILL HAVE POWER HERE IN HOUSE SINISTER
A MYSTERY I'M SURE YOU CAN SOLVE ENSON
I'M BUSY

— AND DISAPPOINTED.
I THOUGHT YOU THREE WERE MY FRIENDS.
THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

ENSON
YOU
OH, PERSHA
IT'S OBVIOUS.
WE'RE ALL THE SAME PERSON -- COULDN'T YOU TELL?
BUT WEREN'T YOU SEARCHING FOR ALTWAAL? SHOULDN'T YOU BE THINKING ABOUT HIM?

THERE'S A CONNECTION
ONE I SEE SO CLEARLY, THEN LOSE
THE TWO OF YOU
THE BEING IN THE EIDOLON
ONE
MANY
HOW?
ALTWAAL
IF THE GAUNTLET WANTS TO LEAD ME TO PYREM, HOW CAN I MAKE IT SHOW ME ALTWAAL?
LET GO--
STOP TRYING TO CONTROL THE CONTACT
SEEK, AND LET IT LEAD YOU--

- EVERYWHERE HE IS!
AAAAAAH!

Barbara
KESEL
WRITER
Andrea
DI VITO
PENCILER
Rob
HUNTER
INKER
Rob
SCHWAGER
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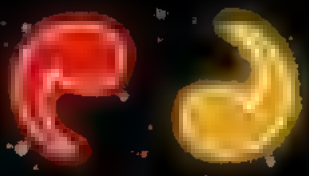
HOUSE SINISTER



HOUSE DEXTER

House Sinister's Leader, **Ingra**, wants to take over House Dexter and reunite the two Houses under her rule. Her daughter **Persha** is seeking Altwaal, the first Leader of all First, hoping to convince him to return and reunite the Houses. Her power amplified by Altwaal's Gauntlet, Persha mentally connects with her father **Pyrem**, Dexter's Leader, instead. He's being held prisoner in Braag's keep, having been captured in the Eidolon rift by an army of House Dexter and Sinister insurrectionists led by **Seahn**, who has made allies of Ingra and Braag. Ingra visits Pyrem, unable to keep away from the man she loves above all others, but her love is hidden beneath her taunts. **Trenin** and **Yala** plan a private raid to free their Leader from House Sinister, hoping to avoid war. Seahn gleefully anticipates the war he believes he has begun, but his euphoria fades when he realizes his closest friends are sneaking away. As Persha tries again to find Altwaal, she makes contact with all possible versions...

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GRACOS, VIHAM, RAVACA MY DEAREST FRIENDS!
AND BETRAYERS
CARE TO RETHINK RUNNING AWAY?
NOT IF IT MEANS HELPING YOU BETRAY HOUSE DEXTER, SEAHN!
BY SIDING WITH SINISTER, YOU'VE CHANGED THE STAKES, SEAHN -- WE WANTED OUR PLACE ALONGSIDE THE FIRST --
--NOT INSTEAD OF THEM!
WE BELIEVED IN YOU! WE WANTED YOU TO CHALLENGE PYREM. BUT TO HAVE HIM CAGED HERE --
-- AMONG OUR ENEMIES!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE?

WHAT I'VE DONE?
WHAT I'VE DONE?
I'M NOT THE ONE WHO WAS RUNNING OUT ON MY FRIEND IN HIS MOMENT OF TRIUMPH!
HOW COULD YOU DOUBT ME NOW?
WE'VE CAPTURED PYREM!
I'VE PROVEN HE WASN'T FIT TO LEAD DEXTER!
NOW IT'S MY TIME!
HERE'S WHERE WE SECUNDAE RISE TO THE LEVEL OF ALL FIRST!
HE'S GONE TOO FAR, AS WE FEARED.
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE HIM
LET'S DO IT
PYREM IS OUR DESTINED LEADER, SEAHN!
THESE ALLIES YOU THINK YOU'VE FOUND IN HOUSE SINISTER --
-- THEY'VE BLINDED YOU TO THE TRUTH!
NNH!
UGRRH!
EERH!
OH, PLEASE
THE TRUTH

THE TRUTH, GRACOS, IS SO FAR AWAY FROM YOUR STUNTED CONCEPT OF REALITY--
I'LL USE SMALL WORDS
THE TRUTH IS THAT I HAVE THE POWER TO STEP IN AND RULE HOUSE DEXTER RIGHT NOW--
--EXCEPT I DON'T WANT IT
YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE?
I'VE COME HOME

WYTEIRL
THERE'S BEEN PROGRESS
SEAHN HAS TAKEN THE FIRST STEP ON AN IRREVOCABLE TRAIL TOWARD WHAT MUST BE
HOW FARE'S YOUR CHARGE?
PERSHA HASN'T YET FOUND WHAT SHE'S SEEKING
SHE'S LOOKING FOR ALTWAAL AMONG ALL THE VISIONS, DREAMS AND SIGHTINGS SHE'S DRAWN IN THROUGH HER AMPLIFIED SIGHT.

IT'S A GRUELING TEST
BUT IF SHE CAN ACCOMPLISH THIS
SHE WILL GAIN PROOF OF WHAT SHE ALREADY KNOWS TO BE TRUE

YOU'RE A MILLION MILES AWAY --
--NOT THINKING ABOUT ABANDONING ME *TOO*, ARE YOU?
AFTER ALL, I *OWE* THIS TO *YOU*, DON'T I?
YOU'VE MADE YOUR OWN FATE, SEAHN
NO MATTER WHAT *SOME* MAY SEE...
ALTWAAL'S VISION
THE TWO FATES!
...OR OTHERS *FEAR*.
WE'VE SEEN ENOUGH
OUR THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE, IHROE
REMEMBER, YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO TELL OTHERS WHERE WE HAVE GONE
I CAN'T WAIT TO RAM MY BLADE THROUGH THAT LITTLE WORM'S HEART
YOU HAVE MY WORD, TRENIN. I'LL KEEP YOUR SECRET
AS I DO ALL I HOLD
MAY ALTWAAL'S EYES GUIDE YOU -

--THROUGH THE GATE INTO THE EIDOLON RIFT!
SHOULD YOU NEED MY HELP HOME, JUST ASK
AN OFFER APPRECIATED, IHROE, BUT WE WON'T NEED TO, TROUBLE YOU
IF YOU'RE RIGHT TRENIN
ALTWAAL DIDN'T WANT US TO TAKE POWER FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE
NOT ONLY WILL WE BE WEAKENED BY THE CROSSING
--BUT THIS TRICK MAY ONLY SERVE TO STRENGTHEN HOUSE SINISTER!
I'M RIGHT, YALA
THERE'S NEVER BEEN A TRAP I COULDN'T WORK MY WAY AROUND!
ALTWAAL'S INTERDICTION AGAINST CROSSING THE EIDOLON IS JUST ANOTHER TRAP.
WITH OR WITHOUT OUR AID IT WILL BE A GLORIOUS BATTLE!

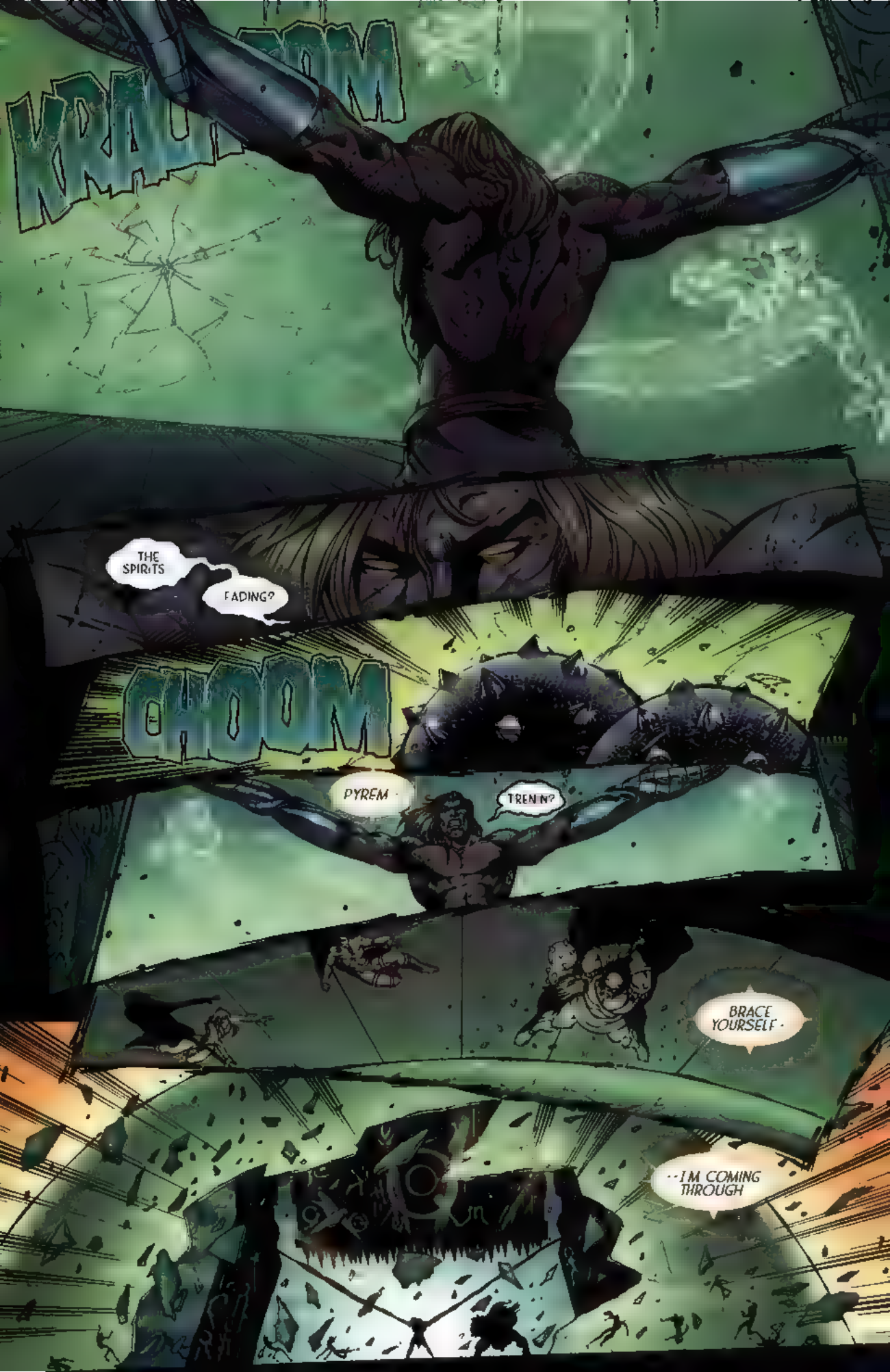
HAVE YOU NO OTHER THOUGHT?
OF THINGS OTHER THAN BATTLE?
HERE'S SANNISH!
ALTHOUGH AT THIS TIME FOR THIS ACTION
I'D WANT NONE BUT YOU BY MY SIDE!
GRRRM!
UNGH!
YALA, WHEN WE'RE HOME AGAIN, IF PYREM SUGGESTS ANY MORE PRIVATE MEETINGS IN THE EIDOLON
I KNOW, I KNOW--- WE CHAIN HIM ON A DEAD WORLD UNTIL THE IMPULSE FADES

WHAT A JOY IT IS TO BE THE LEADER'S CLOSEST FRIENDS.
THE STORED ENERGY SURVIVED THE JOURNEY NOW TO COMPLETE THE ACTION.
IF THIS DOESN'T WORK, TRENIN, I DON'T REGRET THE DECISION TO TRY.
HMM. READY?
READY!
KRSLZLT
SO YOU WERE RIGHT!
WE LOSE OUR OWN POWER, BUT BY SHUNTING IT INTO OUR WEAPONS, WE WERE ABLE TO RESTORE EACH OTHER!
I WON'T BE RIGHT UNTIL WE'VE RESCUED PYREM
TRENIN, DO YOU EVER ALLOW YOURSELF TO KNOW VICTORY?
ONLY WHEN IT'S COMPLETE.

WHAT A DAY!
EVEN THE STENCH OF OVEREXCITED HUMANITY THAT FILLS THIS CAVE SEEMS RIGHT
EVER THINK ABOUT AIRING THE PLACE OUT A LITTLE, BRAAG?
WHY BOTHER? YOU'D JUST FILL IT UP AGAIN WITH ALL YOUR HOT AIR
YEAH.
SO -- YOU THREE READY TO BE WITNESSES TO THE BIRTH OF A NEW ERA?
OH, WAIT -- THAT'S RIGHT YOU DON'T WANT ME TO DEPOSE THE OLD GUY.
TOO BAD
KRNNNCHOOM
IT'S A MOOT POINT NOW THAT --
WHA--?
OH, NO
NOBODY RUINS TODAY!
BRAAG!
WHERE IS PYREM?

YALA! BUT SHE'S STRONG?
YOU CROSSED THE RIFT WITH POWER?
HOW LUCKY FOR YOU.
YOU'LL ALL GET TO PRACTICE THE SKILLS I TAUGHT YOU!
GANNISH?
ARE YOU HERE?
NOT?
GOOD.
I'D HATE TO BE.. HELD BACK.. BY HIS PRESENCE --
-- WHEN THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE!

THE BONDS ARE WEAKENING -- BRAAG'S CONCENTRATION MUST HAVE BROKEN!
SNAPPT
THAT'S NOT ALL I'LL BREAK
I'M SICK OF THE FIGHTING. CAN'T WE JUST GO HOME?
NO! NOT WHILE OUR LEADER IS IMPRISONED!
NOT WHILE HE NEEDS US! YALA! WE'RE HERE WITH YOU!
SHIELD YOUR EYES, GRACOS --
-- TRENIN'S GOT SOME ANGER TO SHARE!

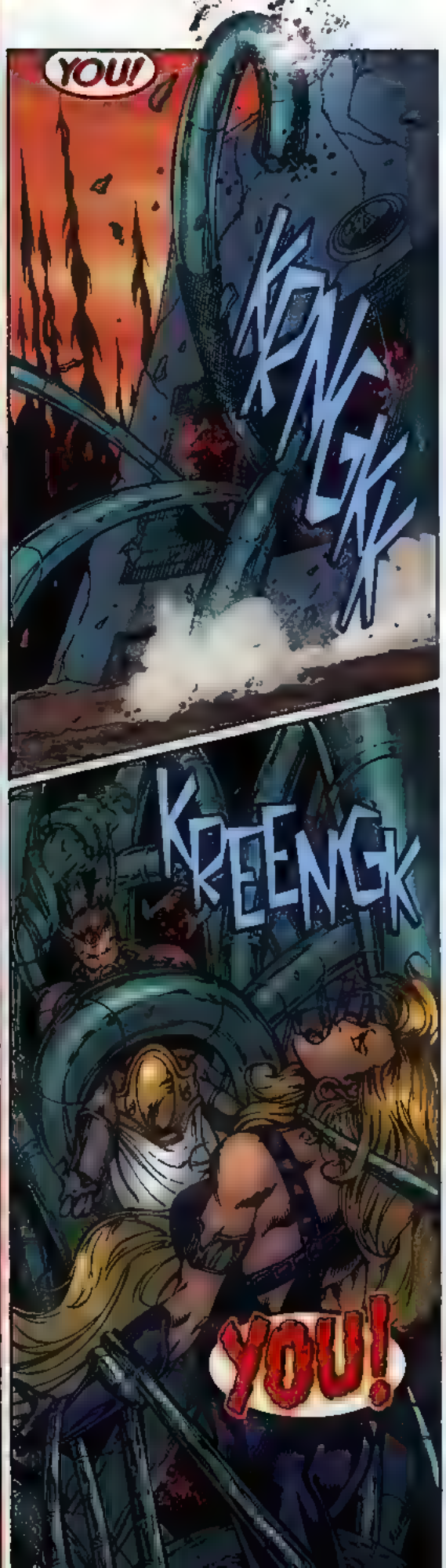

KRAKOOM
THE SPIRITS
FADING?
GHOOM
PYREM
TRENN?
BRACE YOURSELF
...I'M COMING THROUGH

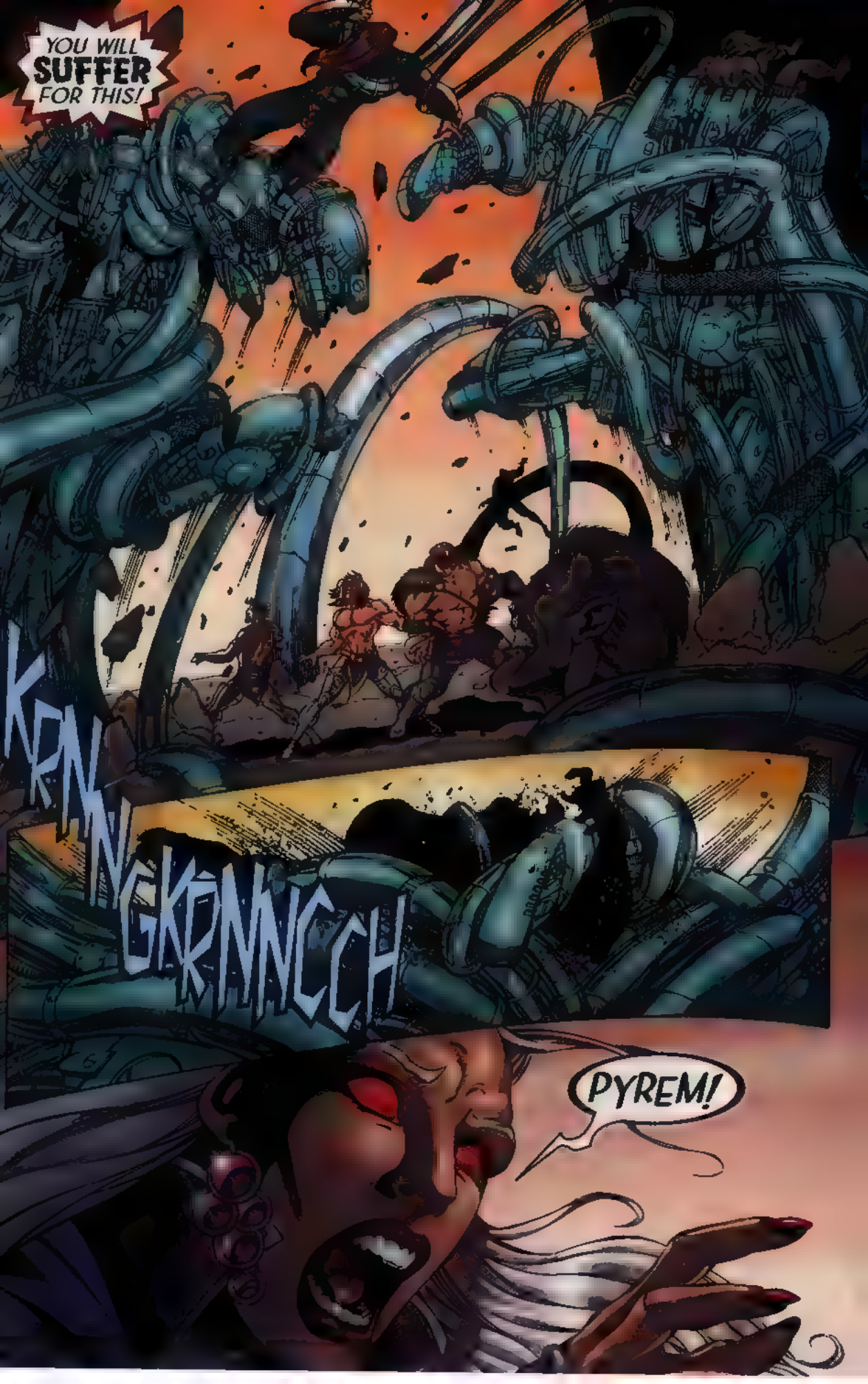
YOU'LL HAVE TO TELL ME HOW YOU MANAGED TO
TO KEEP MY STRENGTH?
SAVE YOUR OWN UNTIL I'VE FREED YOU AND I'LL EXPLAIN
TRENIN, YOU FOOL!
UNNH! INGRA!
HOW DARE YOU TRY TO TAKE BACK MY PRISONER?
OR DIDN'T YOU REALIZE --
THAT I'D BE INVOLVED!
PYREM REMAINS SINISTER'S PRISONER UNTIL I DECIDE OTHERWISE!
HNNO

OH, INGRA -- I AM NOT SEEING WHAT I'M SEEING ?
YOU'RE FREEING PYREM?
INGRA!
YES, BRAAG
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS IS MY HOME! I'M THE MASTER HERE!
PYREM'S MY PRISONER! WITH HIM FREE, WE LOSE OUR WAY TO CONTROL THE OTHERS!
WHY, INGRA?
WHY DID YOU FREE HIM?
DO NOT QUESTION ME, BRAAG --
--AND DO NOT MAKE ACCUSATIONS WITHOUT PROOF!
UNFF!
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOUR POSING, WITCH!

PYREM, WHERE'S ALTWAAL'S GAUNTLET?
GONE
STOLEN
BY HIS EYES! HOW--
AH, NO MATTER LET'S GET YOU AWAY FROM HERE--
BEFORE YALA GETS SO DRUNK ON BATTLE THAT SHE DECIDES TO TAKE ON INGRA
NGRAS HERE?
MORE REASON WHY WE SHOULD NOT BE
EVERYBODY JUST CALM DOWN!
NOBODY'S LEAVING!
SO SPEAKS THE LEADER TO BE
SO, BRAAG, *THIS* IS THE OUTCOME OF YOUR FOOLISH ABDUCTION--HE *ESCAPED*
YOU--
YOU--!

BUT YOU--
--YOU DID IT!


YOU!
KRNGK
KREENGK
YOU!


YOU WILL SUFFER FOR THIS!
KRNNGKRNNCCH
PYREM!

INGRA HIS BLOOD IS ON YOUR HANDS!
GRACOS?
VIHAM?
NO! LET IT NOT BE!
NOOO
Indeed, I fear the cost to all First should be phenomenal...
...but the truth cannot be changed by wishing ourselves back to an innocent state.
Reality must be borne, not denied.
So have I been compelled back here, to the world of enigmatic beings of an age before time.

Inserting myself invisibly into the midst of their daily lives...
I observed a scene of patient communion between enemies— reluctant interrogator and stoic subject reaching the accord of silence.
The prisoner piqued my curiosity, for his true nature was not instantly made plain to my perceptions.
As I pushed to unearth the facts of his existence, a shadowy title for the entirety of his kind came forth...
...the Negation.
A name weighted with bilious enlightenment...
...followed by the vision of a sickening symbol that spells the further erosion of all I know...
There is not simply, beyond we First, a secondary source of power...
...but another universe!
One whose forces could engulf our own.

Barbara
KESEL
WRITER
Andrea
DI VITO
PENCILER
Rob
HUNTER
INKER
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SCHWAGER
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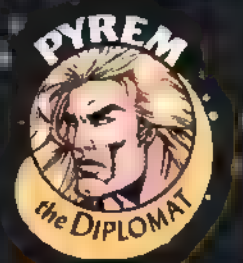
HOUSE SINISTER

HOUSE DEXTER

Seahn of House Dexter has changed allegiances, becoming a member of House Sinister. Allied with Braag the Engineer and **Ingra**, Leader of Sinister, Seahn hopes to be a part of the reunification and takeover of both Houses. But Ingra's weakness is her love for **Pyrem**, Leader of House Dexter, who is currently Braag's prisoner. **Trenin** and **Yala**, Pyrem's closest friends, have staged a raid to free him, managing to find a way around the Eidolon's theft of power to emerge battle-ready on the Sinister side. In the melee that follows, Ingra secretly frees Pyrem, which angers Braag, who kills one of the Dexter First. Meanwhile, **Persha**, Ingra's daughter by Pyrem, has used Altwaal's Gauntlet to uncover the location of the legendary leader, proving he still lives. She has gone to ask him to return and unite the First. **Gannish**'s obsession with truth leads him to Earth, where he finds in the guise of a Negation hunter evidence of another universe, one that could destroy the First.



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MY EYES DO WITNESS, BUT MUST BE BETRAYED BY INCONSTANT VISION, FOR I SEE --
CANNOT SEE!
INSIDE HOUSE SINISTER, YALA OF DEXTER HOLDING SINISTER FIRST AT BAY?
MAKE NO THREAT TOWARD THE CHILDREN, WARRIOR WOMAN, OR THE WAVE OF MY FURY WILL WASH YOU FROM LIFE'S FIELD!
STAND BACK!
YOU WILL LET US BEAR AWAY OUR DEAD!

YOU *ALL* KNOW THAT *NO* ONE HAS EVER ESCAPED THE ARC OF MY BLADE!

COME NO CLOSER, OR YOU'LL TASTE TS STEEL!

WE CAME TO RESCUE *PYREM*, NOT TO START A WAR

BUT ANYONE WHO THREATENS PYREM WIL. FOLLOW *GRACOS* NTO DEATH!

BRAAG'S GOT TO PAY THE PRICE FOR THIS!

BRAAG'S A *MINOR* DANGER, VIHAM -

-- *SEAHN'S* THE TRUE NSTIGATOR OF THIS ATROCITY!

WHO'S TO BLAME DOESN'T MATTER NOW TRENIN

WE HAVE LOST A BRIGHT LIFE TO A POOR CAUSE

OH, GRACOS

IF ONLY WE'D NEVER MET SEAHN!

SEAHN? THE CONFLICT BETWEEN OUR HOUSES PREDATES THAT LITTLE STRUTTER!
OR ARE YOU FORGETTING OUR ENCOUNTER ON THE PLANS OF KREADEY?
HIDING NSIDE FORTS SNT BATTLE, BRAAG!
YOU ALWAYS DID CONFUSE STRUCTURE WITH STRENGTH!
YOU'RE IN HOUSE SINISTER, YA'A
IN MY HOUSE
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU MANAGED TO ARRIVE WITHOUT WEAKNESS
I'LL OUTLAST YOU, BRAAG!
AS I REMEMBER, YOUR STAMINA ONLY BARELY EXCEEDS YOUR PATIENCE!
LITTLE, AND NONE!
BUT HOW EASY WILL IT BE FOR YOU TO RECOVER WHAT YOU EXPEND WHILE ON THIS SIDE?

WHAT IS THIS?
THERE'S FIVE OF THEM AND THIS FIGHT ISN'T OVER?
DON'T TELL ME I PICKED THE WRONG HOUSE
NO
YOU'RE EXACTLY WHERE YOU SHOULD BE--
TRENIN
-AND I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEED
OH?
AND THAT WOULD BE WHAT?

THIS.

GNNH!
YOU MADE A MISTAKE OLD MAN.
YOU DIDN'T FINISH ME OFF.
OR COULDN'T YOU DO IT TO YOUR OWN SON?
MY SON?
DO YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT YOU, HAVING BROUGHT YOURSELF TO SINISTER--
--TO THIS HOUSE
--ARE TOO STEEPED IN THE OBVIOUS
--TO RECOGNIZE IT?

INSIDE YOU LIES THE CORE OF SELFISH CRUELTY SO COMMON TO SINISTERS GET -!

YOU COULD **NEVER** BE MY SON!

FINE

DENY IT

BUT WHY ELSE WOULD YOU HAVE SAVED ME?
WHY BOTHER HAVING ME FOSTERED BY NEVOLE?
WHY DID YOU ALWAYS COME AROUND TO CHECK ON MY PROGRESS?
WHY ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE ME KILL YOU?
DON'T WASTE YOUR FIRE, SEAHN
STAY OUT OF THIS, ENSON! THIS IS BETWEEN ME AND THE MAN WHO WON'T CLAIM ME!
HE'S TOO POWERFUL, SEAHN
IT'S NOT YET THE RIGHT TIME
THEN YOU BE SURE
WHERE HAVE YOU SENT HIM, ENSON?
AWAY
YOU ARE OF DEXTER! HOW DARE YOU SHIELD THAT TRAITOR FROM HIS DUE!
CALM DOWN, TRENIN.
LET'S STEP OUTSIDE, SHALL WE?

YOUR MOTIVES ARE AN ENIGMA TO ME, ENSON -- --WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO THEM?
WE'VE JUST STEPPED BETWEEN MOMENTS.
EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT
I JUST NEED YOU TO LISTEN.
TRUST ME
TRUST
TALK
YOU KNOW MY AIMS ARE BENEVOLENT
YOU AGREED TO TRUST ME ONCE
I NEED THAT TRUST TO CONTINUE
NOT AS FAR AS SEAHN
YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE, PROTECTING HIM
I MADE A BIGGER MISTAKE LONG AGO, LETTING HIM LIVE
SEAHN HAS HIS PURPOSE, TRENIN. HE OR THE OTHER WILL --
OTHER?
STOP
RETURN US TO NORMA. -- NOW!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY DEFENSE OF THAT TROUBLEMAKER--

AND I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT AN *OTHER!*
HMMM
I HAVE A VISITOR

THERE HE IS!
PLEASE ACCEPT MY APOLOGY FOR THIS RUDE INTERRUPTION, REVERED LEADER BUT I'VE COME TO MAKE A PLEA TO YOU
ALTWAAL
EH?
DO DO I KNOW YOU, CHILD?

BUT --
-- THIS IS YOUR GAUNTLET. ITS POWER COUPLED TO MY SIGHT LED ME TO YOU
HERE
HMMM. LOVELY GAUNTLET, THAT
FINE PIECE OF WEAPONRY
AS ALIEN TO MY WORLD HERE AS IS YOUR OWN MAGNIFICENT SELF.
BUT MY NAME IS AYDEN
YOU ARE ALTWAAL, I KNOW IT
WHY ARE YOU HIDING YOURSELF AWAY ON THIS LITTLE WORLD?
YOU'VE GIVEN UP ON US, HAVEN'T YOU?
PLEASE RECONSIDER
I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO CARRY THE BURDEN OF TOO MUCH KNOWLEDGE
I SHARE THE PAIN OF BEING DISAPPOINTED BY THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU
BUT YOU CAN'T JUST ABANDON US --
-- NOT NOW!

WHO IS HE THIS MAN YOU THINK I AM?
WHY DO YOU NEED HIS HELP?
ALTWAAL, THE FIRST CREATED, WAS THE FINEST OF ALL THE FIRST!
FIRST IN GLORY, DEED AND FORM. HIS COMPASSIONATE REIGN OVER THE FIRST LED US OUT OF BRUTAL WARFARE TO HEAVENLY PEACE
BUT CORRUPTION REMAINED
WHEN WAR ERUPTED AGAIN, HE DIVIDED ELYSIA INTO THE TWO HOUSES TO END IT, CREATING THE EIDOLON RIFT THAT DIVIDES OUR HOME
SOME SAY HE DIED IN ITS MAKING.
BUT YOU DO NOT AGREE?
OH OF COURSE NOT
YOU BELIEVE ME TO BE THIS MAN
I FEAR I DO NOT KNOW THIS GLORIOUS HERO YOU LONG TO HAVE RETURN
DO NOT KNOW--!
I DID NOT CHASE ALTWAAL ACROSS THE UNIVERSE TO BE TURNED ASIDE BY A FEEBLE OLD ACT!
IF YOU WON'T HELP ME--!
IF
THEN HOW WILL THE FIRST BE REUNITED?
I CAN ONLY TELL YOU THAT I AM NOT THE ONE WHO MUST ACCEPT THAT DUTY

THEN I HAVE COME FOR NOTHING
PERHAPS
BUT IF IT WERE MY TASK TO FIND THIS MAN AND I HAD NO SUCCESS
I'D WONDER IF I COULDN'T DO THE JOB MYSELF!
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T GIVE YOU THE ANSWER YOU WERE EXPECTING, PERSHA.
I HOPE YOU ARE ABLE TO FIND THE LEADER YOU SEEK
SO DO I, AYDEN
THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND COUNSEL
I'LL LEAVE YOU TO YOUR PEACE NOW
FAREWELL
OH! I NEVER INTRODUCED MYSELF
BUT I SEE YOU KNOW MY NAME
SO
THERE MAY BE HOPE
ALWAYS

NO MATTER WHICH SIDE TAKES *THIS* CONFLICT!
INGRA!
YOU APPEAR TO BE DOING *WELL*, BRAAG
BETRAYER!
WHAT DRIVES YOU, WOMAN?
FIRST YOU SEEK TO *EXPAND* YOUR RULE, THEN YOU *BETRAY* IT BY FREEING PYREM!
YOU ARE THE CAUSE OF THIS DESTRUCTION!
AND NOW IT'S BEYOND EVEN *YOUR* CONTROL!
BRAAG--
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOU COULD HAVE STOPPED IT WITH A GESTURE, BUT IT'S GONE TOO FAR
BRAAG!
ENOUGH!
THERE IS *NOTHING* I CAN'T *CONTROL!*
NOTHING!
EXCEPT YOUR TEMPER
SHOW ME YOUR POWER, INGRA
ALL OF IT
PROVE I'M RIGHT--

"-- THAT EVEN YOU CAN BE CONTROLLED"

THIS IS A STUPID LITTLE GAME AND I DON'T WANT TO WAIT FOR IT TO RUN ITS COURSE --

GO. HOME!

INGRA, STOP!
IT'S TOO MUCH!
YOU'RE DESTROYING WHAT'S LEFT OF MY KEEP!
CONSIDER IT THE PRICE OF YOUR DISRESPECT BRAAG!
INGRA!
YOU RE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS!
WAS DEATH A FAIR PRICE FOR YOUR EXCITEMENT?
LEAVE ME, PYREM!
I HAVE NO NEED TO EXPLAIN MYSELF TO YOU!
GO, PYREM
GO
I WISH I COULD EXPLAIN MYSELF TO YOU

WELL
FEEL BETTER NOW?
MY PLACE IS A WRECK
WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?
YOU CREATED A SITUATION YOU COULDN'T CONTROL
LUCKILY I COULD.
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU COULD!
AND IT TOOK A LOT OF POWER OUT OF YOU, DIDN'T IT?
I'LL RECOVER
BUT NOW THAT I'VE CLEANED UP YOUR LITTLE MESS, MAYBE NEXT TIME YOU'LL OBEY MY WISHES!
NEXT TIME?

BUT INGRA— WE PLANNED THIS SO WELL --
THERE WON'T BE A NEXT TIME!
JUST TIME ENOUGH TO KEEP THE CHILD SAFE
UNTIL THE RIGHT MOMENT COMES!
EYAAAUGH!
INGRA. YOUR RULE OF HOUSE SINISTER IS OVER!

STORYTELLERS

Barbara HESEL
WRITER

Andrea DiVITO
PENCILER

Rob HUNTER
INKER

Rob SCHWAGER
COLORIST

Dave LANPHEAR
LETTERER

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

Mark Alessi
PUBLISHER & CEO

Gina M. Villa
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Michael X. Beattie
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

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THE FIRST
DI VITO
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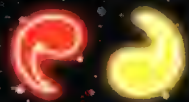
SCHWAGER
Barbara Kesel Andrea Di Vito Rob Hunter Rob Schwager

IN THE BEGINNING...

They were the gods who created the universe before descending into a constant state of war. Then their home, Elysia, was torn by the Eidolon rift as Altwaal separated the First into two Houses to end the warfare. Peace and boredom followed. Now the First have been catalyzed into action with the appearance of the Sigil-Bearers, beings of great power that was *not* given to them by the First, one of whom killed one of the First. If these Sigil-Bearers can destroy the First...their godhood itself is in question.

HOUSE SINISTER



HOUSE DEXTER

Pyrem, held prisoner in Braag's keep in House Sinister, is rescued by Trenin and Yala, but at the cost of the young Secundae Gracos' life. The conspirators behind Pyrem's kidnapping, Seahn and Braag, fight to keep their prisoner. Seahn faces off against Trenin, whom Seahn believes is his father, a fact that Trenin vehemently denies. Enson interferes, sending Seahn away. Ingra secretly helps with Pyrem's escape, an act witnessed by Braag, who goads her into an overwhelming display of strength that strips away the last of her power reserves — she teleports the entire Dexter contingent home, leaving her vulnerable to a combined attack by Seahn, Braag, Orium, and the enigmatic Enson. Meanwhile, Persha has gone to plead with Altwaal for his return. She finds Ayden, the man she believes to be Altwaal, on Quin. He doesn't admit to being Altwaal, but does send her on her way with the idea that perhaps *she* is the unifier she seeks.

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I CAN HARDLY WAIT FOR YOU TO AWAKEN, MY LOVELY INGRA

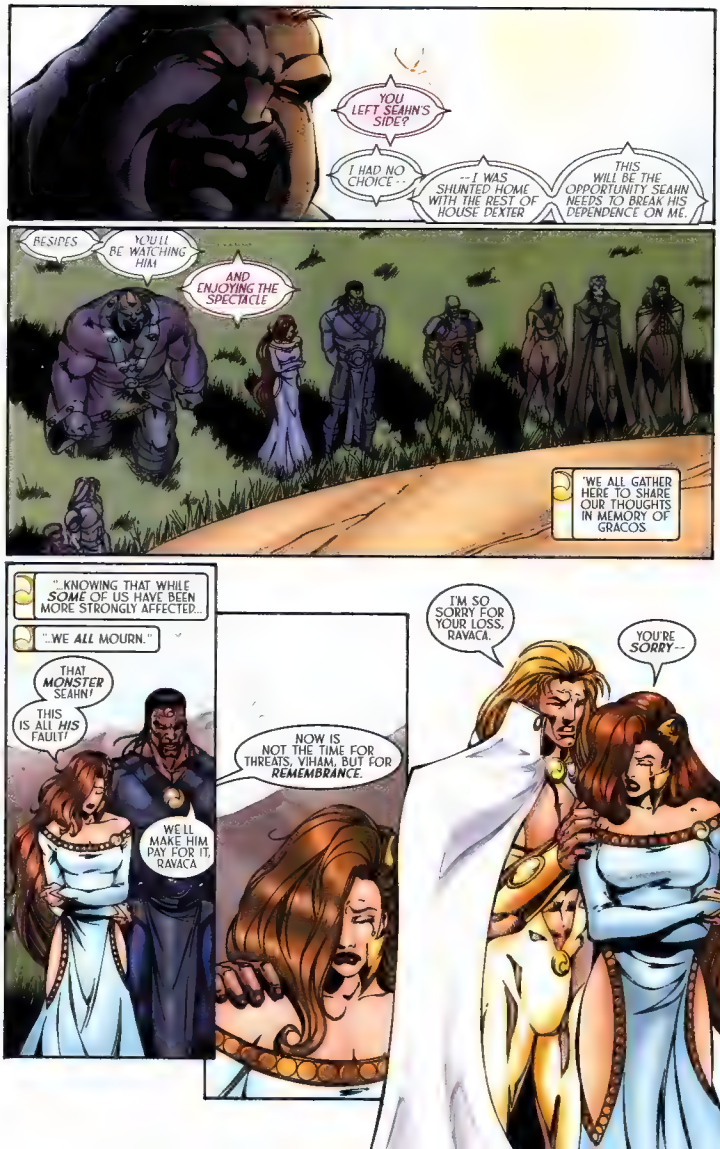
AND SEE THE PALACE I'VE BEEN PREPARING FOR YOUR ARRIVAL
I KNEW YOU'D NEVER COME TO ME OF YOUR OWN VOLITION
FEW DO
I LIKE THIS WORLD
NNNH
I HOPE YOU WILL TOO
WHAT ^
HOW DARE YOU!
YOU'RE DRAINED OF POWER
AND THERE'S NONE TO BE HAD HERE
-- THIS WORLD'S TOO CLOSE TO THE BLEAK ZONE
IT'S NO USE STRUGGLING, INGRA

BUT I KNEW THAT IF I COULD GET THE CHANCE, I WOULD PROVE MY LOVE FOR YOU
FOREVER
MY NAME SOUNDS SO WONDERFUL COMING FROM YOUR LIPS
SAY IT AGAIN
IT'S QUIET HERE
PEACEFUL
I COME HERE TO UNWIND
YOU'VE COME HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE THIS WORLD'S NEW QUEEN
MY QUEEN
NO ENERGY HERE BUT WHAT YOU BRING IN WITH YOU
ERVULSH!

HOW UNFORTUNATE FOR YOU, INGRA.
BUT LUCKY FOR ME.
WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM *YOU*
...THIS WILL BE SO MUCH EASIER!
NOW IT'S ALL JUST A MATTER OF *SUGGESTION*
WYTURE?
ARE YOU STILL HERE?
HOW SO?
GO?
MY JOURNEY WAS A FAILURE, I'M AFRAID.
ALTWAAL *IS* ALIVE.
BUT
...HE REFUSES TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS IDENTITY.
I...EXPECTED TOO MUCH OF HIM.

YOU'RE UNUSUALLY ANIMATED -- WHAT'S HAPPENED?
SO MANY THINGS YOU DON'T NEED TO LET WORRY YOU
SEAHN AND BRAAG HAVE STAGED A COUP
OVERTHROWING YOUR MOTHER...
WHO IS NOW ERVULISH'S CAPTIVE
WHAT?
WHO'S GOT MOTHER?
ERVULISH
LOOK FOR YOURSELF
UH NOT HIM.
I'LL RISK MOTHER'S EYES INSTEAD
INGRA
LET ME SEE AS YOU SEE --
OH!
UGH

HMMM.. HAVING MOTHER OCCUPIED *WOULD* GIVE ME GREATER FREEDOM TO ACT
BUT I'LL HAVE TO GO THERE AND GET HER
I SAW PLENTY OF SHADOWS, SO IT SHOULD BE SIMPLE FOR ME TO GET IN AND GET AWAY
OH NO!
WYTURE, I'VE JUST HAD A *TERRIBLE* IDEA
I SHOULDN'T RESCUE HER
PYREM SHOULD
HIS SAVING HER COULD BRING BOTH PYREM AND INGRA *AND* THE TWO HOUSES TOGETHER!
I CAN SLIP BACK INTO DEXTER AS BEFORE -- BUT I'M ABANDONING YOU AGAIN
YOU DON'T MIND?
TWO OF US IN THAT HOUSE WOULD BE TOO MUCH
JUST RUSH BACK TO TELL ME WHAT HAPPENS
HAVE YOU... CONSIDERED THAT PYREM MIGHT NOT COMPLY?
CONVINCING HIM TO GO TO HER RESCUE WILL BE SIMPLE..
IT'S SHIELDING THE MOTIVE BEHIND SUGGESTING IT THAT WILL BE DIFFICULT
IT ALWAYS IS
I'VE HAD PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE SHIELDING *MINE*
ENSON

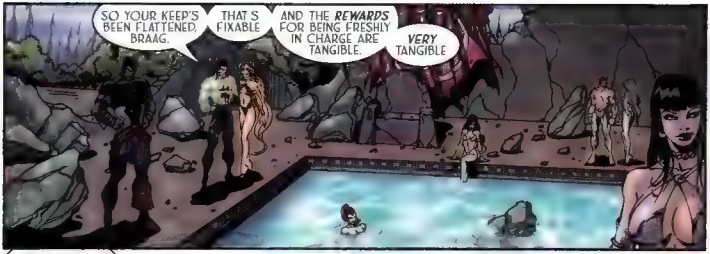

YOU LEFT SEAHN'S SIDE?
I HAD NO CHOICE...
--I WAS SHUNTED HOME WITH THE REST OF HOUSE DEXTER
THIS WILL BE THE OPPORTUNITY SEAHN NEEDS TO BREAK HIS DEPENDENCE ON ME.
BESIDES...
YOU'LL BE WATCHING HIM!
AND ENJOYING THE SPECTACLE
"WE ALL GATHER HERE TO SHARE OUR THOUGHTS IN MEMORY OF GRACOS
"...KNOWING THAT WHILE SOME OF US HAVE BEEN MORE STRONGLY AFFECTED...
"...WE ALL MOURN."
THAT MONSTER SEAHN!
THIS IS ALL HIS FAULT!
WE'LL MAKE HIM PAY FOR IT, RAVACA
NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR THREATS, VIHAM, BUT FOR REMEMBRANCE.
I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, RAVACA.
YOU'RE SORRY--

I'M SORRY IT WASN'T *YOU* CRUSHED BY--
I --
RAVACA!
BY HIS EYES!
OH, PYREM! WHAT AM I SAYING?
FORGIVE ME, MY LEADER!
THERE'S NOTHING TO FORGIVE
I *UNDERSTAND.*
GRACOS WAS ALMOST A SON TO ME, EVEN THOUGH I HAVE NO CHIL--
NO--
NO. *SON.*
"LET US ALL NOW REMEMBER GRACOS AS ONE OF US.
LET THE CIRCLE RING TRUE

--ANOTHER LOOP OR TWO SHOULD LEAVE YOU COMFORTABLY SECURE
IS IT MY COMFORT OR *YOURS* THAT CONCERNS YOU?
BOTH, MY BEAUTIFUL INGRA
WHY? ARE YOU AFRAID I'LL TRY TO *LEAVE*--
--OR *LEAP*?
YRRRK!
NO MORE OF THAT!
I KNOW YOU CAN'T PULL FREE--

ALTHOUGH I ENJOY THE WAY YOU *TWITCH*
NOW STOP *FIGHTING* ME!
I'M *PROTECTING* YOU!
THE *OTHERS* DIDN'T WANT TO KEEP YOU AROUND, BUT *I* DID.
OTHERS?
SCAHN AND BRAAG?
AND ORIUM
NO MORE TALKING ABOUT *THEM*
JUST *ME*.
INGRA, I'VE DREAMED OF THIS NIGHT FOR CENTURIES
AND I WON'T HAVE YOU *RUINING* IT!

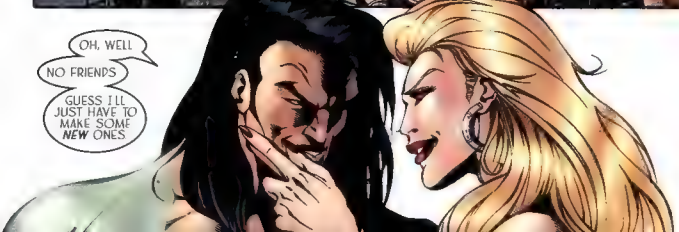
TELL ME THIS WAS ALL WORTH IT!


SO YOUR KEEPS BEEN FLATTENED, BRAAG.
THAT'S FIXABLE
AND THE REWARDS FOR BEING FRESHLY IN CHARGE ARE TANGIBLE.
VERY TANGIBLE

WITH INGRA OUT OF THE PICTURE, THAT LEAVES HOUSE SINISTER TO YOU AND ME
UNLESS YOU DON'T WANT TO SHARE.

HELP YOURSELF.
WE MAKE A GOOD TEAM, KID
JUST DON'T GET ANY IDEA ABOUT TURNING ON ME --
--I'VE STILL GOT MORE FRIENDS IN THIS HOUSE THAN YOU DO

THAT'S RIGHT. I DID HAVE ONE HERE, BUT ENSON SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED WITH THE REST OF THE DEXTERS.


OH, WELL
NO FRIENDS
GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE SOME NEW ONES.

SEAHN, HELP ME THINK THIS THROUGH
IT WAS *TOO* EASY.
ORIUM'S TOUGH, AND I DON'T DOUBT ERVULSH CAN HOLD HER, BUT WASN'T IT JUST A LITTLE TOO *SIMPLE* TO TRAP *INGRA?*
ENSON WAS INVOLVED
THINGS TEND TO GO MY WAY WHEN HE SAYS THEY WILL
YOU MAY HAVE MORE FRIENDS, BUT I THINK *I'VE* GOT THE ADVANTAGE
IN A *FRIEND* WHO *ISN'T* HERE. I LIKE A MAN WHO THINKS HE'S ON TOP WHEN HE'S DROWNING
SO LET'S NOT GIVE ME A REASON TO *FORGET* I LIKE YOU.
NO PROBLEM WITH THAT
HMMPF!

"... SO LET US NEVER FORGET HE WHOSE MEMORY WE WILL CARRY IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER
"AS THE SHINING BEING OF GRACOS BECOMES ONE WITH THE LIGHT, LET US RECALL HIS TIME AMONG US"

IF PYREM'S WORDS ARE NOT COMFORT ENOUGH, KNOW THIS --
GRACOS WAS NOT KILLED IN VAIN --
-- HIS SACRIFICE WAS NECESSARY TO ALL THAT MUST BE.
NECESSARY?
MY STRANGLING THE LIFE OUT OF SEAHN IS NECESSARY.
HOW COULD WE HAVE BEEN SO BLIND TO WHAT HE WAS?
NOT NOW, YOU TWO.
DON'T MAKE ME THINK OF SEAHN.
LET ME REMEMBER GRACOS.
I REMEMBER HIS BRAVERY
HIS LOYALTY TO HIS FRIENDS
HE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN MY CHILD
BUT I WOULDN'T BE MORE PROUD OF HIM IF HE WERE
NOW MAY HE JOIN THE ETERNAL LIGHT WHOSE BEAUTY AND BRIGHTNESS SHALL NEVER FADE UNTIL THE END OF ALL
WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE, PERSHA?
WHY NOW?

I CAME TO WHERE YOU WERE. I HAD NO IDEA YOU'D ALL BE GATHERED TOGETHER
DO YOU DO THIS FOR EVERY FALLEN MEMBER OF YOUR HOUSE?
I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED *SOME* OF THE OLD WAYS TO SURVIVE YOUR MOTHER'S RULE.
DON'T THE PEOPLE OF HOUSE SINISTER REMEMBER THEIR DEAD?
OF COURSE! BUT NOT..
. TOGETHER
WHY *ARE* YOU HERE, PERSHA?
DID *SHE* SEND YOU TO GLOAT?
GLOAT?
YOU OF ALL BEINGS DON'T *KNOW*?
PYREM, INGRA WAS *BETRAYED* BY BRAAG AND SEAHN --
-- *SHE'S* A PRISONER NOW!
SO.
HER OWN DECEITS HAVE BEEN PLAYED AGAINST HER.
IT'S FITTING
SHE'S PAYING THE PRICE FOR GRACOS' DEATH, PERSHA
LET HER

THAT ATTITUDE'S UNLIKELY TO GET MOTHER FREED
AAAH!
IT'S ALL RIGHT -- YOU HAVE NO ENEMIES IN THIS HOUSE, PERSHA
GREETINGS, TRENIN
THE SAME CAN'T BE SAID FOR ALL FROM HER HOUSE.
FORGIVE THE INTERRUPTION, PYREM, BUT I TOLD YOU I HAD TO SPEAK TO YOU DIRECTLY AFTERWARD.
HEAR ME OUT --
I DEMAND YOU GRANT ME THE RIGHT TO HUNT AND EXECUTE THE TRAITOR SEAHN!

?RVULSH
HOW DID YOU CONVINCE THOSE THREE TO HELP YOU CAPTURE ME?!
YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW?
ORIUM CAME TO ME - HE'D SEEN HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU --
HE SAID IT WAS DESTINY, INGRA
IT'S IMPORTANT FOR OUR FUTURE -- THE FUTURE OF ALL THE FIRST -- THAT I KEEP YOU HERE

IT'S FATE, DON'T YOU SEE?
WE WERE MEANT TO BE TOGETHER!
FATE?
FATE, DESTINY, OR ORIUM
THEY ALL HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON.
WHEN I GET AWAY FROM HERE

THEY ALL DIE.
WHINE
GO AWAY

PLEASE
HNNNH!
IHROE
BUT YOU HAVEN'T! EVERYTHING I SEE SHOWS I'M SLIPPING FURTHER AWAY!
TOO WELL
REMEMBER
NO--YOU REMEMBER YOUR PLACE!
YOU'LL GET YOUR WISH, IN TIME.
BUT DO NOT PRESUME TO ENTER MY HOME UNINVITED EVER AGAIN, IHROE
I DON'T OWE YOU THAT.

WHAT DO YOU OWE HER?
GANNISH!
PUT ASIDE YOUR PETTY SEER'S TRICKS, ORIUM -- I'VE UNCOVERED A THREAT THAT DEMANDS A TRUCE BETWEEN THE RED WITCH AND MYSELF, BUT I CANNOT FIND HER!
YOU KNOW THAT I AM NOT ONE FOR THE DECEITFUL TRYSTS OF POLITICS -- THE DANGER IS TRUE
I NEED TO SPEAK TO INGRA RIGHT AWAY!
SHOW ME WHERE SHE HIDES?
I CAN SHOW YOU
BUT SHE MAY BE OF LITTLE HELP TO YOU

STORYTELLERS

Barbara KESEL
WRITER

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The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

Mark Alessi
PUBLISHER & CEO

Gina M. Villa
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Michael A. Beattie
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Tony Panaccio
VICE PRESIDENT
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CONTROLLER

Brandon Peterson
VICE PRESIDENT
SPECIAL PROJECTS

Barbara Kesel
HEAD WRITER

Bart Sears
ART DIRECTOR

Pam Davies
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Sylvia Bretz
PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Janet Bechtle
Randy Martin
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Michelle Pugliese
FREELANCE COORDINATOR

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THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel
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IN THE BEGINNING...

They were the gods who created the universe before descending into a constant state of war. Then their home, Elysia, was torn by the Eidolon rift as Altwaal separated the First into two Houses to end the warfare. Peace and boredom followed. Now the First have been catalyzed into action with the appearance of the Sigil-Bearers, beings of great power that was *not* given to them by the First, one of whom killed one of the First. If these Sigil-Bearers can destroy the First...their godhood itself is in question.

HOUSE SINISTER

HOUSE DEXTER

Ingra has fallen into the clutches of Ervulsh, who is delighted to have Sinister's lovely Leader grace his lonely world. **Persha** learns of Ingra's capture from Wyture, who is delighted when Persha decides that this is how she can reunite **Pyrem**, Leader of House Dexter and Persha's father, with her mother. Persha travels through shadow to Pyrem's side, arriving at the remembrance ceremony for Gracos, who was killed during the battle that followed **Seahn's** kidnapping of Pyrem. Seahn and Braag are determining how best to rule the House they've gained through Ingra's overthrow, not knowing that **Trenin** has just declared a death hunt for Seahn. **Orium** the seer, who conspired with Seahn and Braag, is visited by Throe. She comes demanding his help because of what he owes her. **Gannish** appears, curious about the bond between Dexter's herald and Sinister's seer, but more interested in Ingra's whereabouts...

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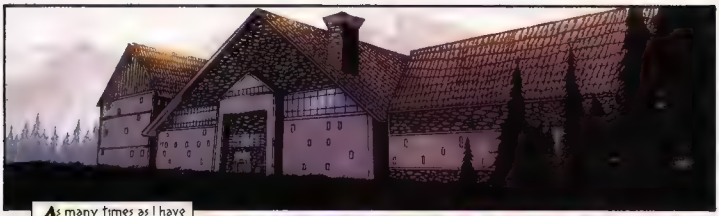
YOU GAVE INGRA TO ERVULSH?

BUT, GANNISH --
-- SHE THREATENED THE CHILD
SHE HAD TO GO AWAY
JUST HEARD ABOUT OUR AMAZING COUP, GANNISH?
LOOKS LIKE *NEW* BLOOD DID WHAT THE OLD STUFF COULDN'T!
TREAD LIGHTLY, SEAHN --
I CAN *SEE* WHOSE BLOOD CREATED *YOU*
TRENIN'S AND TULITY'S? *EVERYBODY* KNOWS THAT
TRENIN *YOU* THINK?
I THINK *NOT*
SO, SEAHN -- YOU, ORIUM, AND BRAAG HAVE FELLED THE MIGHTY INGRA

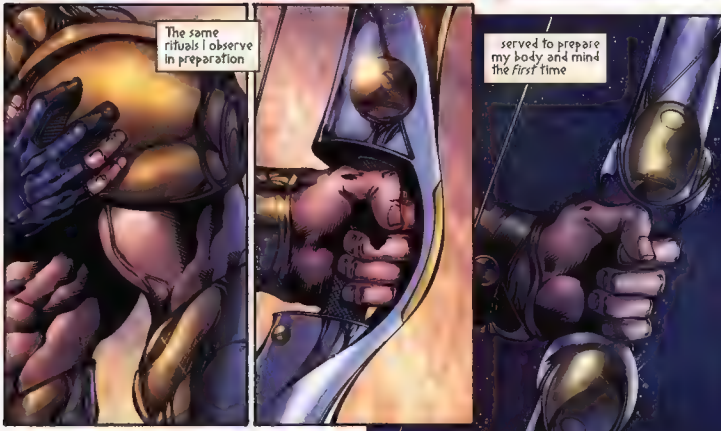
NO. THERE'S SOMETHING STILL UNSAID --
I FAIL TO SEE HOW YOU THREE COULD HAVE RAISED THE POWER NEEDED FOR THAT ACT!
FOUR
THERE WERE FOUR SOURCES, TRUTHSEEKER.
THE GLORY OF THE FIRST, THE WEIGHT OF EARTH, TIDE OF WATER, AND --
YOU.

YOU SENT ME TO THAT WORLD ALREADY AWARE OF WHAT I'D DISCOVER
YOU HAVE DAMNED ME TO THE HERETIC'S ROLE, ENSON!
YOU KNEW HOW THAT KNOWLEDGE WOULD CORRUPT MY REALITY
I AM IT
YOUR JOURNEY'S JUST BEGUN GANNISH
YOU SEE THAT
YOU HAVE FORCED ME BACK TO SINISTER'S SIDE TO SEND YOU AWAY FROM THIS HOUSE A SECOND TIME
YOU MUST GO WHERE I SEND YOU DO WHAT I BID OF YOU
SEE WHY
NOOOOOOOO!

THIS TASK THAT AWAITS ME. A GREATER BURDEN PLACED ON STRAINING SHOULDERS
WHY MUST I BE THE ONE?
IT IS YOUR FATE, GANNISH. YOUR DUTY, AND YOUR NATURE TO SUFFER
SUCH PAIN
KNOWLEDGE SO SWEETLY UNFORGIVING DRAWS TO ITSELF TROUBLESOME COUSINS OF CONTEMPTUOUS INFORMATION..
LIKE THIS MORSEL, SUNG TO ME BY A WATERY VISION.
OH MUSTN'T SAY, MUSTN'T TELL!
SECRETS
I DEMAND YOU GRANT ME THE RIGHT TO HUNT AND EXECUTE THE TRAITOR SEAHN!
TRENIN?
THAT OLD BUFFOON THINKS HE CAN SNEAK UP AND KILL ME?
NOT ANYMORE!
YOU CAN'T HUNT SOMEBODY WHO KNOWS HE'S BEING HUNTED!
BESIDES, ENSON'S BACK I'M GOLDEN
DON'T MAKE LIGHT OF THIS DARK VISION, SEAHN
THE HUNTER NEVER FAILS
YOU HAVE ABANDONED YOUR ADOPTED HOUSE FOR YOUR BLOOD ONE--THAT WOULD BE SEEN AS BETRAYAL WORTH DEATH TO MANY IN OUR HOUSE--
--ALTHOUGH WE ARE BY NATURE CRUELER
IGNORE THIS WARNING AT YOUR PERIL



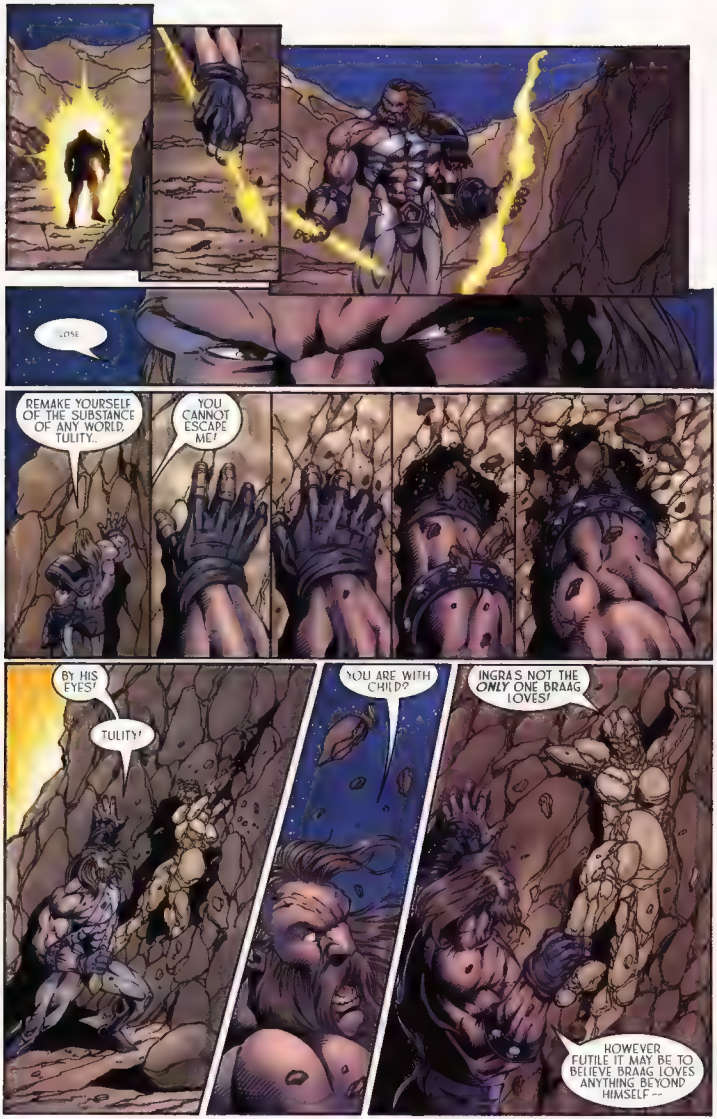
As many times as I have embarked on a hunt
the routine never varies


The same rituals I observe in preparation
served to prepare my body and mind the *first* time

GIVE ME THE BOLT THROE
TULITY MUST FACE THE RESULT OF HER IMPUDENT ACT
SHE TRIED TO KILL ALTWAAL TO PROVE HER LOVE -- BOTH ATTEMPTS MISFIRED
HER MOTIVES FOR BOTH WERE FAULTY, BUT THE CRIME OF ASSASSINATION WAS HER CHOICE, HER DEED, AND FOREVER HER RESPONSIBILITY TO ATONE
MY PITY CANNOT PUT ASIDE MY OUTRAGE AND OBLIGATION
SHE WILL BE RETURNED TO FACE JUSTICE IN ALTWAAL'S NAME

NO MATTER HOW MANY WORLDS I MUST TRAVERSE FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF HER ESSENCE, OR HOW LONG THE TIME BETWEEN INCEPTION AND EXECUTION

I WILL RETURN TO ELYSIA WITH MY PREY


...LOSE
REMAKE YOURSELF OF THE SUBSTANCE OF ANY WORLD, TULITY..
YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ME!
BY HIS EYES!
TULITY!
YOU ARE WITH CHILD?
INGRA'S NOT THE *ONLY* ONE BRAAG LOVES!
HOWEVER FUTILE IT MAY BE TO BELIEVE BRAAG LOVES ANYTHING BEYOND HIMSELF --

-- YOUR CONDITION DOES NOT EXCUSE YOUR CRIME!

NO MATTER. I WILL STILL BRING YOU TO FACE JUSTICE
AND RISK THE CHILD?
WE ALL KNOW HOW SOFT YOUR BIG HEART IS, TRENIN - - -
- - YOU'LL NEVER TAKE ME LIKE THIS
TULITY, YOU MOVED YOURSELF BEYOND MERCY--
--WHEN YOU ATTACKED ALTWAAL!

PREPARE TO PAY

KRKR
KRK
KRK
KRKR
YOU'VE CHANGED, TRENIN
KHRKKKL
YOU USED TO BE SO KIND
THE GOLDEN AGE IS OVER
WHMMMP
CARRY YOUR CHILD TO TERM, TULITY--
KNOWING THAT I'LL ALWAYS BE AT YOUR HEELS
Patience is ever the mark of a great hunter

PERSHA, WHAT YOU ASK ME TO DO IS *IMPOSSIBLE*.
WHY?
YOU ASK ME TO ABANDON MY RESPONSIBILITIES *HERE* TO RUN TO THE AID OF SINISTER'S CRUELEST?
SHE'S MY MOTHER.
YOU LOVED HER ONCE. I'M THE EVIDENCE
DO YOU REALLY FEEL *NOTHING* FOR HER *NOW*?

PLEASE, PYREM.
GO TO HER
SAVE HER
ERVULSH HAS HER -- CAN'T YOU FEEL HER HORROR?

PERSHA, WITH ALL THAT'S HAPPENED, I DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY TO CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION
YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY IF YOU LIKE, BUT NO MORE TALK OF INGRA
I... CAN'T HELP HER

I NO LONGER HAVE THE GAUNTLET!
OUR BIGGEST OFFENSIVE ADVANTAGE, AND I LOST IT TRYING TO RIGHT A FRIEND'S ANCIENT ERROR!
IT'S GONE, PERSHA.

I LEAD HOUSE DEXTER! FREEING SINISTER'S LEADER WOULD BE BETRAYING MY HOUSE.
I CANNOT DO THAT.
EVEN THOUGH HER CAPTURE IS YOUR FAULT?
SHE WEAKENED HERSELF SAVING YOU!
BUT WHAT IF YOU USED--
AH
PYREM, I HEARD YOU USED ALTWAAL'S GAUNTLET WHEN YOU WERE ATTACKED IN THE EIDOLON.
SURELY, WITH A WEAPON LIKE THAT...
"...GONE!"

HWWF!
HWWF!
UNGH!
HWWF!
HWWF!
NNNGH
NNH?
HWWF!
WH WHAT?
HWWF!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?

DO YOU CURSE ME?
HWWFF
HWWFF
UNNNGH!
HWWFFE
HWWFFE
GAAAAAAAAH!
WWAAAAH!

WWWAAAAAAH!
HHHHUHHAAAHHU
YOU POOR, WRETCHED CHILD.
TULITY!
IS YOUR FREEDOM WORTH YOUR BABE'S LIFE?
WAAAAH!
TELL ME A LIE I'LL *BELIEVE*, TRENIN
I BELIEVE IN THE TIE OF A MOTHER'S BLOOD
YOU'LL BE BACK FOR THE BOY

AND I'LL BE WAITING
So we did
The boy-child and I
Time passed, but Tulity
truly an unnatural mother
did not return
Eventually, it became time to move the trap

Every new phase of the hunt requires fresh planning.
Some tricks and traps hold true
New ones are discovered or invented—
—such as my evasion of Aitwaal's rule against crossing the Eldolon with power—
—but there are occasions when the spirit of the hunt is compromised.
When skill is discarded.
in favor of deceit
SNEAKING IN?
HOW UNLIKE YOU TRENIN
ONLY I AM EVERYWHERE

STORYTELLERS

Barbara KESEL
WRITER

Andrea DI VITO
PENCILER

Rob HUNTER
INKER

Rob SCHWAGER
COLORIST

Dave LANPHEAR
LETTERER

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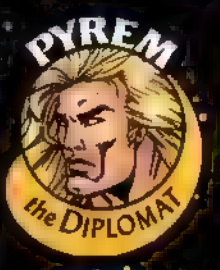
HOUSE SINISTER

HOUSE DEXTER



Gannish the truthseeker returns from Earth to find that **Ingra**, Leader of House Sinister, has been overthrown by a small group of conspirators: **Seahn**, a recent convert to Sinister's side; Braag, whom Ingra thought was her toy; **Oriun**, the mad seer and former Leader who may be saner than he appears; and Enson, Seahn's enigmatic friend and protector. Challenging the conspirators, Gannish receives from Enson a vision that compels him along a new path. **Persha**, **Pyrem's** daughter, tries to get Pyrem to go to the rescue of Ingra, her mother. **Trenin** prepares to hunt down Seahn much as he pursued his mother Tulity, would-be assassin of the Leader of all First, Altwaal, centuries ago. Tulity birthed and abandoned her baby to escape Trenin, who patiently waited with the child for her return. When she did not, he chose a different tactic, deceit, the same tactic he uses now. Trenin travels to House Sinister, sneaking inside with his power intact and his face changed...

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A hunter's honor is as crucial to him as are the weapons of the hunt.
He must, at the onset, determine if the quarry is worthy.
If the target lacks honor, the hunter may himself stoop to less than honorable tricks.
Which makes such deviations from honor no less repulsive...
...than a mother who would abandon her newborn babe.
Although, to hunt Tulity, what I intended to do with her child was just as sickening.

I used the child as bait

NEVOLE!

I'VE BROUGHT ANOTHER FOSTERLING FOR YOU!

WILL YOU TAKE HIM IN?

TRENIN!

YOU NEVER HAVE TO ASK!

YOU KNOW THEY'RE ALWAYS WELCOME. ALL THE LITTLE ONES YOU BRING TO MY HOME

AS ARE YOU

WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS LITTLE CHARMER?

WHOSE SON?

THE MOTHER ABANDONED HIM AT BIRTH.

I'VE BEEN CALLING HIM SEAHN

AFTER THE LOST BOY IN ORLAM'S TALE

I'LL WATCH OVER HIM FROM TIME TO TIME

WAIT, TRENIN ABANDONED AT BIRTH?

BUT THIS CHILD ISN'T A NEWBORN

WHERE HAS HE BEEN?

WITH ME

My honor had fled--

I shied from telling the truth

Better the child be thought my half-blood spawn

than my foot towards his mother's execution.

Be it by nature, ego, or curiosity--

Tulity would be lured back to her baby, her capture, and her death

It was only a matter of time

which drifted past

When the hunter is too long on the trail--

--the mind plays tricks--

--sees what isn't there--

TULTY

--misses what is

AHHH

COME TO ME, MY BABY BOY!

KRNGK

NOOO!

KEEP YOUR HANDS FROM THE CHILD, TULTY!

KEEP YOUR *OWN* CLEAR, TRENIN -- HE'S *MY* CHILD, NOT YOURS!

MINE TO DO WITH

AS I *PLEASE!*

WHAPPT

SEAHN!

YOU'VE NAMED HIM?

THAT WAS *MY* RIGHT, TRENIN

SO HE'S YOURS, FOR NOW

ARE YOU HARMED, LAD?

NAH

HAH
I'M GONNA GO HIDE MYSELF AWAY ON SOME STUPID DEAD WORLD BECAUSE I'M AFRAID OF TRENIN?
NOT A CHANCE
IF HE REALLY WANTS TO COME HAVE IT OUT WITH ME, I'LL BE READY
LOOK, BRAAG --
-- IT'S NOT LIKE TRENIN COULD ACTUALLY BRING HIMSELF TO KILL ME
HE FOUGHT TOO HARD TO KEEP ME ALIVE WHEN I WAS A KID
YOU ARE STICKING CLOSE, RIGHT, ENSON?
I'M RIGHT HERE
THEN LET'S NOT WASTE OUR TIME TALKING ABOUT HIM, SEAHN.
IT'S TIME TO GET A FEW THINGS STRAIGHT ABOUT HOW HOUSE SINISTER IS GOING TO BE RULED NOW THAT INGRA IS NO LONGER AN ISSUE
THEY THINK INGRA'S SO EASILY FORGOTTEN?
HER CONTROLLING WAYS WILL LOOK LIKE A BLESSING IF THAT PAIR OF DUNCES TAKES CONTROL
FOOLS
CAN'T THEY SEE WHERE THE REAL THREAT LIES?
SO INGRA'S OUT AND GANNISH HOLDS HER REPLACEMENTS IN CONTEMPT
INTERESTING TIMES IN HOUSE SINISTER
NOT THAT I DON'T APPRECIATE ALL YOU'VE DONE, SEAHN.

BUT THESE CHAOTIC TIMES CALL FOR A DECISIVE LEADER
HERE'S A DECISION --
WE NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR RESISTANCE FROM HOUSE DEXTER
WE'LL CONSCRIPT THE SECUNDAE INTO MILITIAS.
PREPARING FOR WAR SHOULD KEEP THEM FROM ACTING UP THE WAY THE DEXTER SECUNDAE DID
AT MY INSTIGATION!
WITHOUT MY PRODDING, THEY WERE AS PASSIVE AS--WHA- ?
ENSON--?
STAY WITH ME, HERE.
JUST LETTING AN OLD FRIEND PASS.
HMMM?
OLD FRIEND?
BUT WHO--?
HE'S NO ONE YOU KNOW NOW.
YOU LOOK AS THOUGH YOU'VE SEEN YOUR OWN GHOST, SEAHN.
YOU KNOW ME?
I DON'T KNOW YOU, DO I?
LET THE STRANGER GO, SEAHN.
HERE'S ANOTHER DECISION --
WE CARVE BACK THE MASS OF INGRA'S CASTLE TO OPEN A PLAZA, RIGHT HERE.
BOLD MOVE.
BOLD? NOW YOU'RE ON BRAAG'S SIDE?
ENSON, I --
UNNH!

THE BOLD MOVE WAS *MINE*--CLEARLY, *NOTHING* FOOLS ENSON
TRENIN. YOU'RE TRENIN.
I'VE CLAIMED HUNT ON YOU, SEAHN
YOU HAVE TWO CHOICES--
GIVE YOURSELF OVER TO ME TO FACE JUSTICE IN HOUSE DEXTER--
--OR DIE.
I *KNEW* YOU WOULDN'T LET IT REST!
NOT AFTER GRACOS GOT KILLED
LISTEN TO ME!
I'LL NEVER GO BACK, TRENIN!
THIS IS MY HOME NOW!
THEN YOU CHOOSE TO DIE?
HUHH!
YOU'D REALLY KILL YOUR SON?
YOU--!
WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR YOU TO SEE THAT YOU'RE NOT *MINE*, SEAHN?

FORGIVE MY INTERRUPTION TRENIN
I AM SICK OF--
EH?
EVEN THOUGH I ADMIRE YOUR AUDACITY I CANNOT LET YOU SUCCEED
ENSON?
DAMN YOU, CREATURE!
YOU'RE ALWAYS INTERFERING!
YES, I AM!
AND I WILL AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN!
FORGIVE ME--
--I PREFER--
TO KEEP CONTROL
CONTROL?
FEEL BETTER?
AS I SAID, I WILL INTERFERE...
..AS MANY TIMES AS IT TAKES TO GET YOU READY
READY?
FOR WHAT?

FOR WHAT IS COMING

THE BOY IS CRUCIAL TO OUR SURVIVAL, TRENIN --

SEE

HAVEN'T YOU ALWAYS KNOWN THIS?

ISN'T THAT WHY YOU FOUGHT SO HARD TO PROTECT HIM?

SEAHN BELIEVES YOU TO BE HIS FATHER BECAUSE OF IT

THAT'S ENOUGH!

I'M NO SEER!

I KNEW *NOTHING* OF THE BOY'S FATE!

I WAS MERELY A HUNTER AFTER PREY!

BUT THIS IMPORTANCE YOU SPEAK OF --

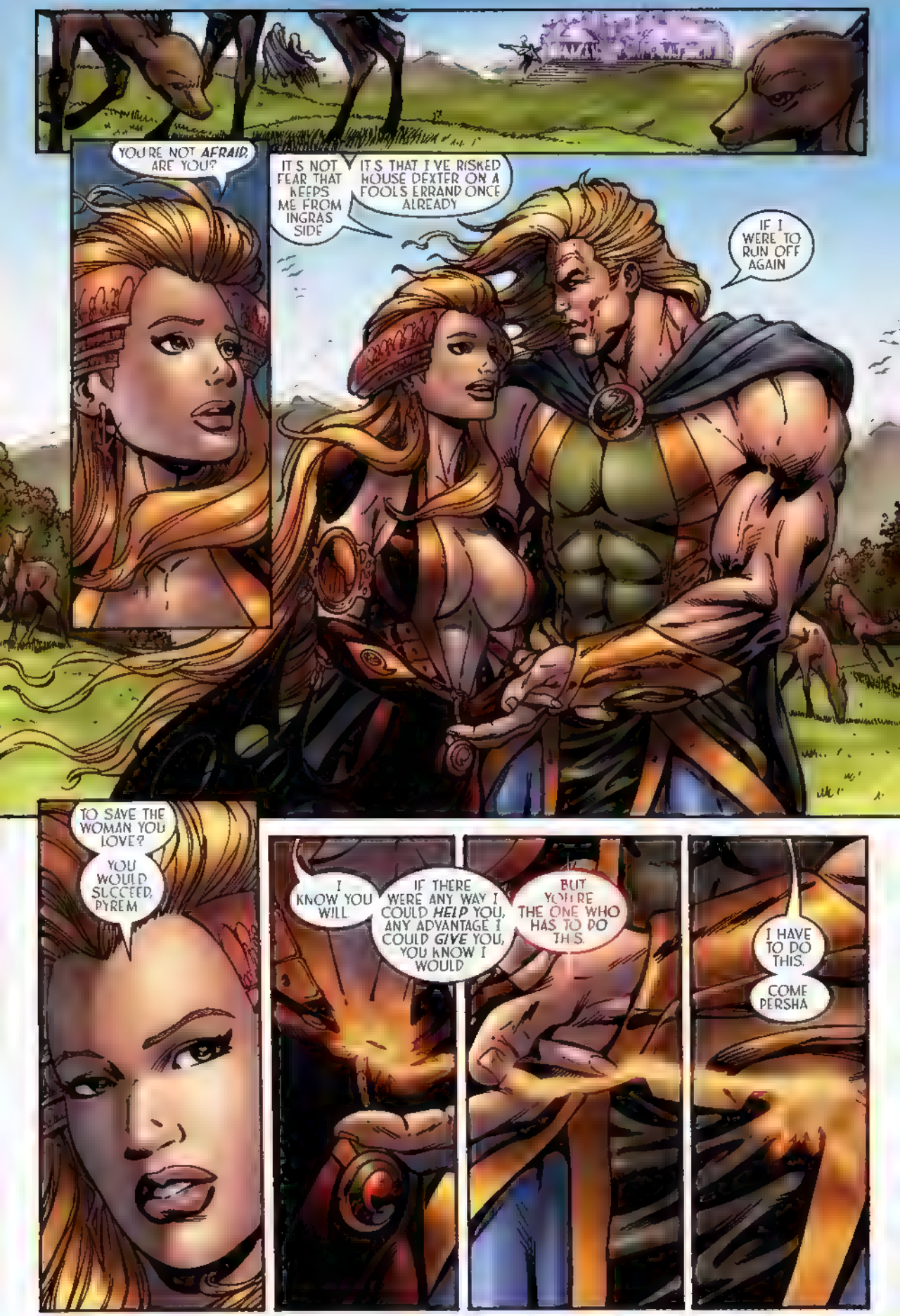
HIS BEING CRUCIAL TO *YOUR* PLANS *DOES NOT* RELIEVE SEAHN OF *RESPONSIBILITY* FOR HIS ACTIONS!

TRUE.

THAT *IS* TRUE

HOW *INTERESTING*

SO YOU DON'T FEEL ANY RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD HER AT ALL?
PYREM, I THOUGHT HOUSE DEXTER WAS THE HOME OF KIND HEARTS
NOT MINE.
NOT WHERE YOUR MOTHER'S CONCERNED


YOU'RE NOT AFRAID, ARE YOU?
IT'S NOT FEAR THAT KEEPS ME FROM INGRAS SIDE
IT'S THAT I'VE RISKED HOUSE DEXTER ON A FOOLS ERRAND ONCE ALREADY
IF I WERE TO RUN OFF AGAIN
TO SAVE THE WOMAN YOU LOVE?
YOU WOULD SUCCEED, PYREM
I KNOW YOU WILL.
IF THERE WERE ANY WAY I COULD HELP YOU, ANY ADVANTAGE I COULD GIVE YOU, YOU KNOW I WOULD
BUT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAS TO DO THIS.
I HAVE TO DO THIS.
COME PERSHA

THEY'RE A PATIENT BUNCH, BUT I'D PREFER NOT TO KEEP THE COUNCIL WAITING
GREETINGS ORDIAL MORIENNE
BE WARNED IT'S TRUE
HE'S BRINGING INGRA'S CHILD
TO COUNCIL?
A SINISTER SECUNDAE?
ARE WE TO WELCOME HER AS AN EQUAL?
GANI, YOU CAN BE SURE THAT HER MOTHER'S BEHIND THE GIRL'S APPEARANCE HERE.
INGRA'S NOT ABOVE USING HER OWN CHILD TO GET WHAT SHE WANTS
SCHULLUN, PERSHA IS ALSO PYREM'S CHILD
REMEMBER HIS STRENGTH OF WILL
BETWEEN THEM, THEY'VE CREATED A PASSIONATE EMPATH
A DANGEROUS COMBINATION
AAAAHHH
listen TO YOUR FINE WHINES!

Beautiful TIME WASTED ON PETTY SPECULATION
. NOT THAT I MIND THE dramatics
BUT WOULDN'T IT BE SIMPLER TO SIMPLY ASK THE GIRL why SHE'S COME?

SAVE FOR TRENIN THE COUNCIL IS COMPLETE
GO INSIDE TELL THEM YOUR STORY
WELCOME, PYREM.
AM I TO--?
ALLOW MY DAUGHTER THROUGH THE VEIL OF PRIVACY, IHROE?
YES
DAUGHTER
PYREM, DON'T LEAVE ME--
PLEAD YOUR CASE WITH THEM, PERSHA
I BACK WHATEVER DECISION THEY MAKE
AND I HOPE THAT A TWAIN'S FAITH IN ME WAS JUSTIFIED
THE HIGH COUNCIL OF DEXTER WELCOMES YOU, PERSHA OF SINISTER
PERHAPS YOU WILL EXPLAIN TO US WHY PYREM CALLED US ON YOUR BEHALF?
COUNCIL ELDERS, I KNOW YOU BY YOUR NAMES, BUT NOT ALL YOUR FACES
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO TRY AND MATCH THE TWO -
YALA
ANTEM
INDORIENNE
ORDIAL
RAAMIA
SCHULLUN
GANI
REASH
BEING SECUNDAE, AND INGRAS CHILD, I HAVEN'T BEEN ALLOWED TO MEET MANY OF YOU, BUT YOU ALL KNOW MY FATHER
PYREM
.. AND BEING FIRST, I'M CERTAIN YOU'VE ALL MET MY MOTHER.
I AM NOT HERE AS HER AGENT, NOR WOULD SHE WANT ME TO BE HERE
I'M HERE TO PLEAD FOR YOUR HELP TO SAVE ALL OF THE FIRST
SAVE US? GO ON FROM?

FROM THE SIGIL-BEARERS OF THE WORLDS BELOW
I'VE BEEN GIVEN A VISION--IF THE TWO HALVES OF ELYSIA ARE NOT REUNITED, WE WILL *ALL* BE DESTROYED.
I WENT TO ALTWAAL TO BEG FOR HIS RETURN.
WENT TO *ALTWAAL*?
BUT HE'S *DEAD!*
THAT'S WHAT HE'D LIKE US TO THINK, BUT DO ANY OF YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT HE IS GONE FOREVER?
THE MAN I MET AND BELIEVE TO BE ALTWAAL
REFUSED MY HELP!
ALTWAAL REFUSED?
THEN YOUR VISION MUST HAVE BEEN FALSE SIGHT, PERSHA
THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE IS TO BELIEVE THAT ALTWAAL WOULD REFUSE US IN A TIME OF NEED
YALA ..*GANNISH* TRUSTED MY SIGHT
YOU KNOW *HE* CANNOT BE DECEIVED
THIS MAN YOU MET--
WHAT MAKES YOU SO CERTAIN HE *IS* ALTWAAL?

BECAUSE I USED HIS GAUNTLET TO GUIDE ME TO HIS SIDE
HIS GAUNTLET?
HOW DID YOU COME TO POSSESS IT...?
AND WHERE HAS IT GONE?
IT'S NOT HERE
I LEFT IT
WITH A FRIEND
SOME WHERE
YOU HAD ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL OF ALTWAALS WEAPONS AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE IT IS?
INDORIENNE!
THE GIRLS HOUSE SINISTER!
YOU CAN'T EXPECT HER TO TELL US ALL HER SECRETS
NOT RIGHT AWAY
IF SHE DID SEE ALTWAAL...
...AND HE DID SAY WHAT SHE SAYS.
THEN YOU KNOW I'LL BE INTERESTED IN HEARING more.

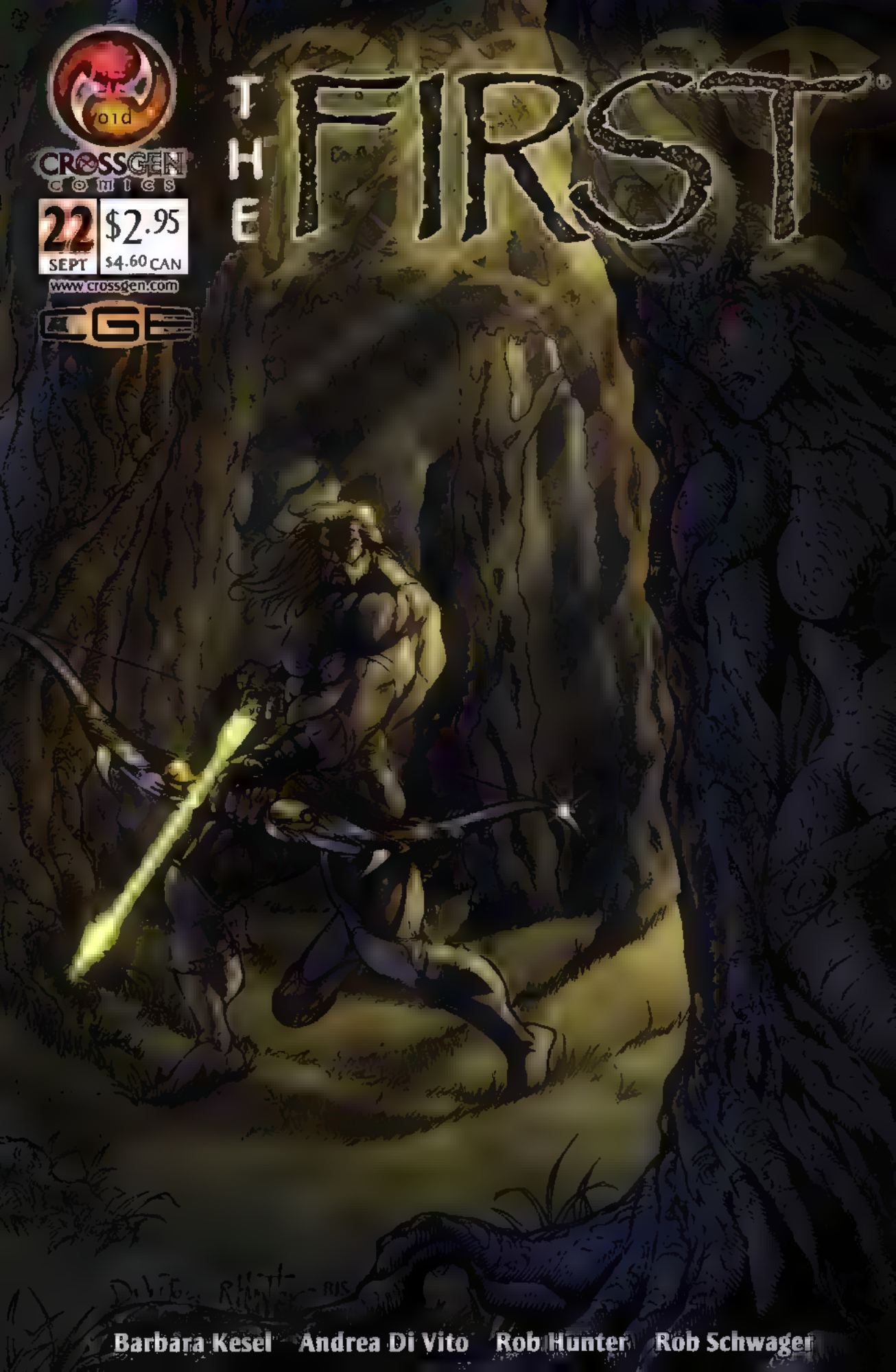
The unendurable weight of my impossible task was a catastrophic burden eased only by the hope of its being shared with another.
But dare I ask she whose visage brightens my wounded heart to make such a sacrifice?
It must be asked of her, even if her denial makes my unwelcome labors more onerous.
YALA...
GANNISH?
YOUR CALL RESCUED ME!
THE COUNCIL'S BEEN TALKING AND DEBATING FOR HOURS!
MY POOR WARRIOR, TRAPPED BY TALK!
YOU'VE HAD YOUR FILL OF ARGUMENT, I TAKE IT
THE COUNCIL COULD FILL THE EMPTY EIDOLON WITH WORDS THAT GO NOWHERE!
GANNISH, NOTHING'S RIGHT ANYMORE!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

YALA
REMEMBER WHEN I TOLD YOU I MIGHT ASK SOMETHING IMPOSSIBLE OF YOU?
NOW IS THAT TIME

I HAVE TO GO AWAY
I CAN OFFER YOU NO PROOF SAVE MY OWN CERTAINTY, BUT I HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH A TASK WHICH FORCES ME AWAY FROM ELYSIA UNTIL ITS COMPLETION
BUT I CANNOT BEAR OUR BEING APART
WILL YOU JOIN ME?

IF YOU'D ASKED A DAY AGO, I WOULD HAVE REFUSED, BUT NOW--YES!
HOUSE DEXTER--ALL ELYSIA!--IS CHANGING.
MY LOYALTY IS STRONG, BUT THE DARKENING MOOD--MY JOY IS FADING!
I NEED TO ESCAPE BEFORE THE TURMOIL CHANGES ME!
TAKE ME AWAY--LET ME LEAVE THE QUESTIONS TO THE THINKERS AND GO SOMEWHERE ELSE

BE SOMEONE ELSE?
AS LONG AS YOU REMAIN AT MY SIDE
ANYWHERE
ANYONE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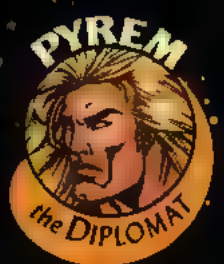
IN THE BEGINNING...

They were the gods who created the universe before descending into a constant state of war. Then their home, Elysia, was torn by the Eidolon rift as Altwaal separated the First into two Houses to end the warfare. Peace and boredom followed. Now the First have been catalyzed into action with the appearance of the Sigil-Bearers, beings of great power that was *not* given to them by the First, one of whom killed one of the First. If these Sigil-Bearers can destroy the First...their godhood itself is in question.

HOUSE SINISTER

HOUSE DEXTER

As he stalks the child of the woman he killed centuries before, **Trenin** remembers the hunt that brought the assassin Tulity down and **Seahn** to House Sinister. Seahn and Braag have taken over House Sinister from the deposed Leader, **Ingra**, who is being held prisoner by the arachnoid Eryuish. **Persha**, Ingra's daughter by **Pyrem**, has been taken by her father to meet with the High Council of the house that he leads. Abandoning her there to plead her case for unity between the two warring Houses, he has removed himself to decide if he will give in to Persha's pleas and rescue Ingra. Finally, a disguised Trenin tries to attack Seahn, only to find himself taken away by Enson acting as Seahn's protector. Trenin convinces Enson that no future importance excuses Seahn from responsibility for his behavior *now*...



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I left Elysia as Trenin
YOU EIGHT WILL SERVE AS MY COUNCIL
HERE ALL DECISIONS WILL BE MADE, WITHIN THIS RING OF STONES AND IN FULL PUBLIC VIEW.
EIGHT? NOT TEN?
ONE SEAT WILL BE MINE AND I'M HOLDING ONE IN RESERVE
FOR ALTWAAL?
ALTWAAL IS DEAD, RAAMIA
THEN THAT LAST SEAT IS MINE.
IHROE SAID YOU WERE RETURNING, TRENIN!
BUT NOT SOON ENOUGH -- YOU MISSED A GREAT BATTLE, TRENIN!
WAS YOUR QUEST SUCCESSFUL?
SEE FOR YOURSELF

I returned to a new name that would define and haunt me for all time
I LANDED MY QUARRY, BUT I TAKE NO PRIDE IN THE TROPHY
TULITY CHOSE TO RESIST BEING RETURNED FOR JUDGMENT
THE TRAITOR HAS PAID THE PRICE FOR HER CRIME
IT WOULD SEEM THE HUNTER HAS ALSO PAID A STEEP PRICE
WELCOME HOME, TRENIN THE HUNTER

AND WHO S THIS?
GO AHEAD
GREAT LEADER PYREM, MY NAME IS SEAHN
AND
GO ON
YOU RE DO NG VERY WELL
..AND I AM A NEW SON OF HOUSE DEXTER!
WELCOME TO ELYSIA, SEAHN OF DEXTER!
TRENIN
SEEMS TO HAVE KNOWN MORE THAN ONE KIND OF success WHILE AWAY!
WHO IS THIS BOY TRENIN?
JUST SOMEONE I PICKED UP ON MY TRAVELS
TRENIN!

YOU MUST LET THE BOY GROW UP!
YOU CAN'T KEEP RETARDING SEAHN'S AGING -- IT'S NOT RIGHT!
TRENIN, WE WERE MEANT TO MATURE NATURALLY UNTIL THE AGE OF OUR GIFTS!
BUT THIS --
YOU --!

WHO KNOWS WHAT IT'S DONE TO HIS PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT!
YOU'VE BROUGHT ME MANY STRAYS OVER THE CENTURIES, BUT YOU'VE NEVER STAYED TO WATCH THEM, AND YOU'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING THIS CRUEL
WHAT MAKES THIS ONE DIFFERENT?
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO HIM, LOVE?
I NEED HIM YOUNG AND VULNERABLE
THIS BOY IS CAUGHT IN A HORRIBLE STRUGGLE BETWEEN HIS MOTHER AND ME
MAYBE LEAVING HIM TO DIE WOULD HAVE BEEN KINDER
DON'T BE FOOLISH, TRENIN --
NO MATTER WHAT TROUBLE EXISTS BETWEEN HIS MOTHER AND YOU, DEATH IS NEVER A BETTER ANSWER
TRENIN, I TRUST YOU DO WHAT YOU MUST, BUT DO THINK OF THE BOY WHATEVER THIS TROUBLE IS, END IT
COME SEAHN
LET'S GO HUNTING.

FIRST LESSON PATIENCE
OBSERVATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS
The hunter's life is a solitary one
LEARN TO THINK LIKE THE ANIMAL TO ANTICIPATE ITS MOVEMENTS.
Home and hearth are waystations, not destinations.
NOW THAT YOU KNOW THE QUARRY, LEARN THE WEAPONS OF THE HUNT
BOW AND ARROW
SWORD AND SPEAR
If too many ties of the heart are established
SEAHN
LISTEN TO ME
WE'RE ABOUT TO HUNT A VERY SPECIAL PREY.
YOU MUST DO EVERYTHING EXACTLY AS I TELL YOU.
HEED MY WORDS, FOR IT IS YOU WHO WILL BE IN THE MOST DANGER
I'M NOT AFRAID -- YOU'VE TAUGHT ME TOO WELL, TRENIN.

THERE'S STILL MORE TO MASTER -- YOU MUST LEARN TO *FEEL* FOR THE SIGN
SPOT A TRAIL WHERE NONE EXISTS
YES, YES -- BUT WHAT *ARE* WE HUNTING?
FATE, SEAHN
the commitment to the hunt is compromised...
WE'RE HUNTING FATE
leaving greater room for error
MY CHI
YAAAH!

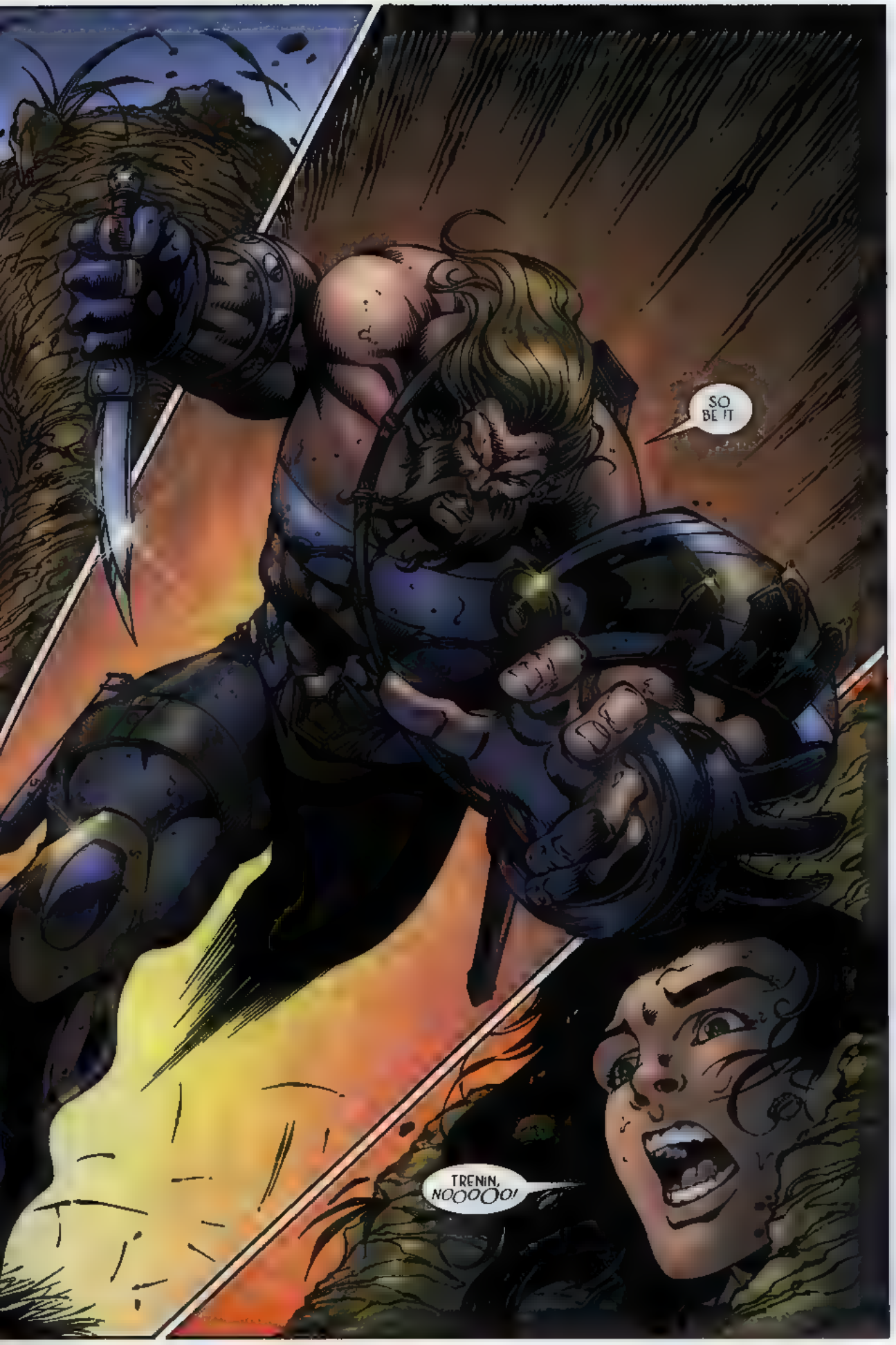
I DID WHAT I *HAD* TO DO, TULITY
TO ENSURE THE CAPTURE --
OF *YOU*

I'M NOT PROUD
OF MY ACTIONS
--BUT I'M LESS PROUD OF YOURS!
SEARN
THIS IS TULITY
YOUR MOTHER

THAT'S MY MOTHER?
YOU HAVE A CHOICE NOW, TULITY
RETURN TO FACE JUSTICE OR SUFFER DEATH AT MY HANDS
HA HA HA HA!
DEATH HERE OR THE DEATH AWAITING ME IN ELYSIA?
NO, TRENIN
SEAHN! STAY NEAR ME!

I CHOOSE LIFE.

YOUR CHOICE NOW, TRENIN --
ARE YOU WILLING TO *TRADE* MY LIFE FOR MY CHILD'S?
AAAHH!
BECAUSE YOU'LL HAVE TO GO THROUGH *HIM* TO REACH *ME*
LET ME GO!
LET ME GO!

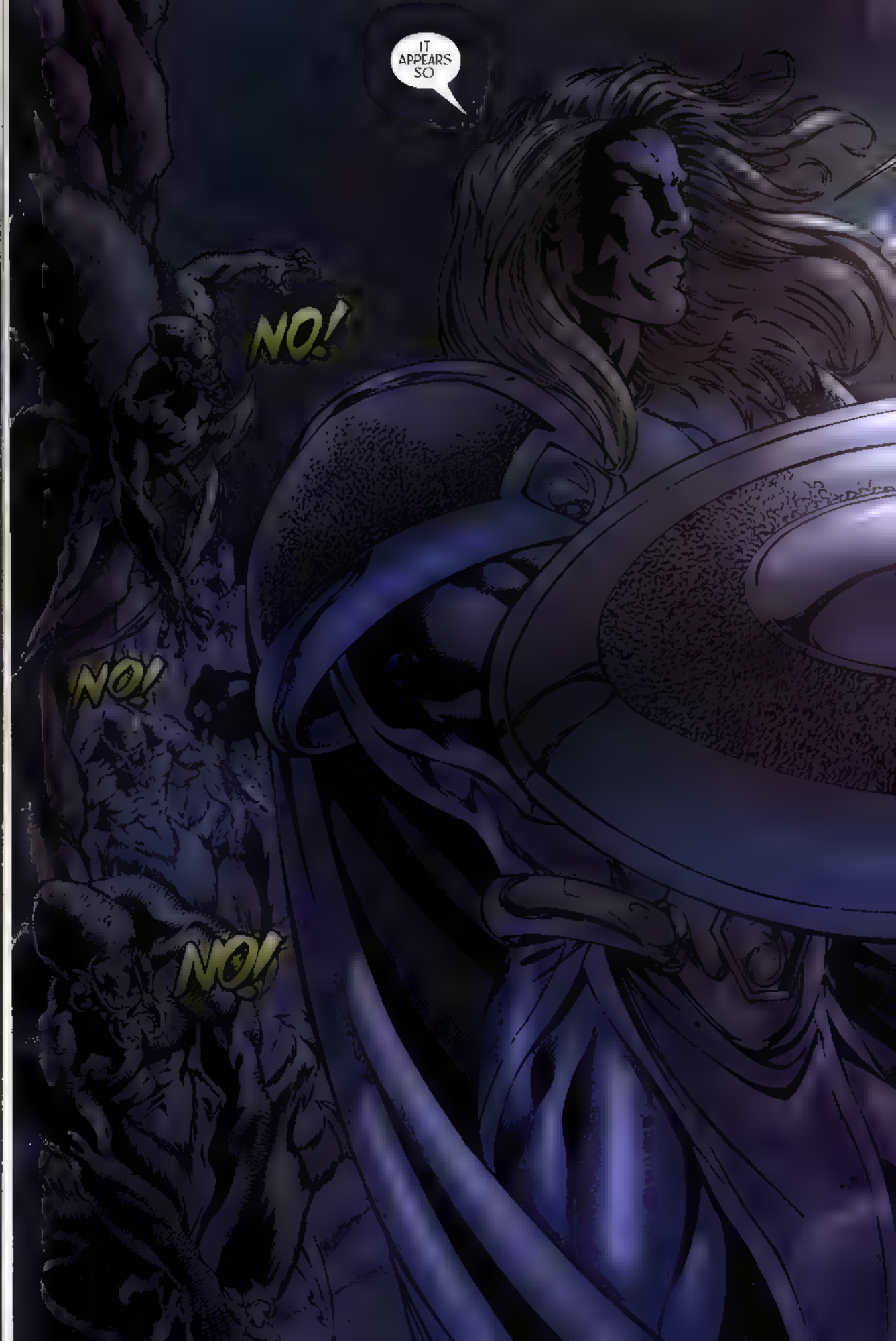

SO BE IT
TRENIN, NOOOOO!

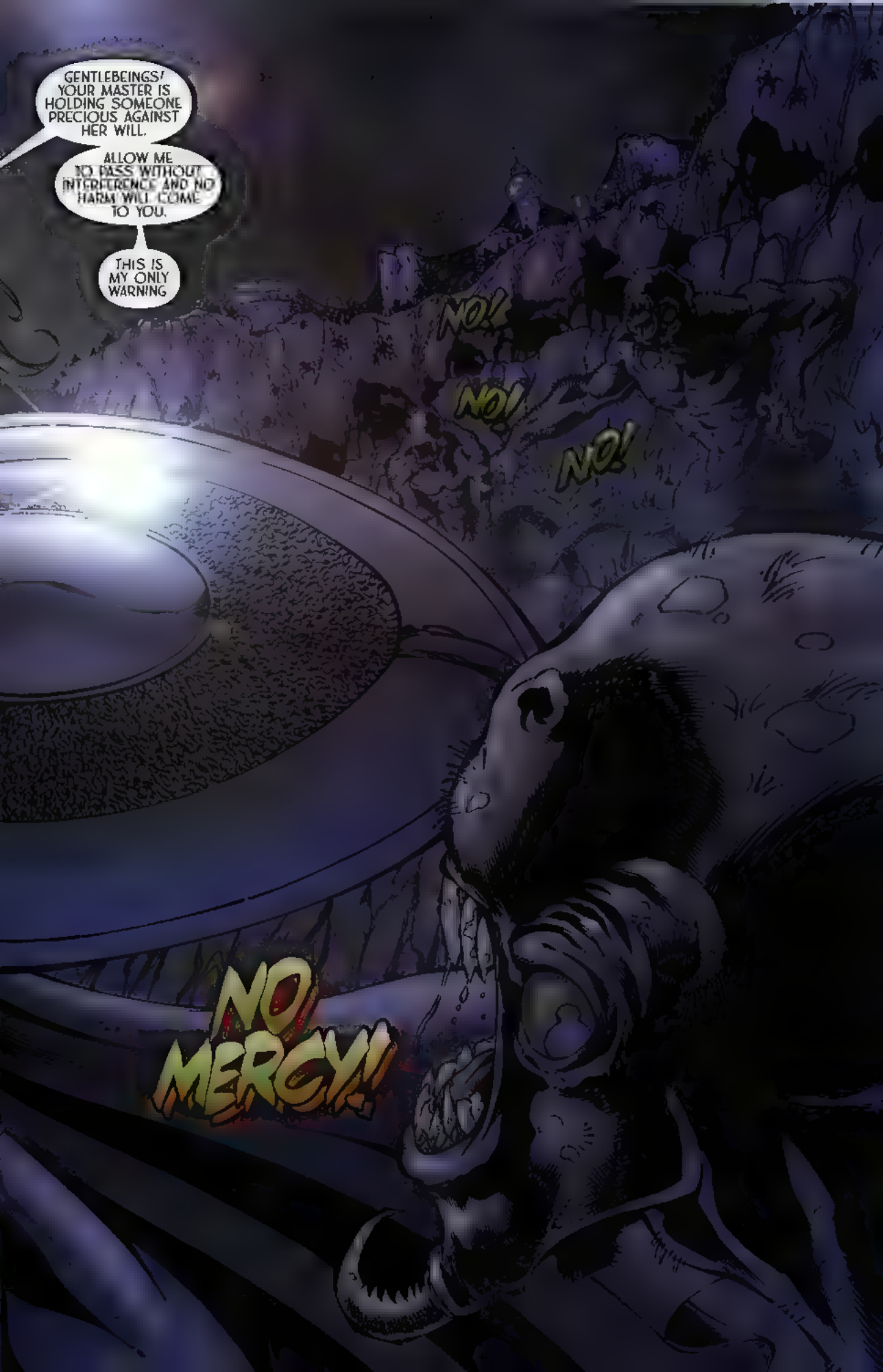
DON'T KILL M!
YRRTCH!
YOU SURPRISE ME, TRENIN
YOU WERE ALWAYS TENACIOUS, BUT NEVER SO..
INNITTAL.
BUT YOU'VE ERRED
YOU'VE MADE HIM YOURS.
BETTER DEAD THAN THAT.
HE'S MINE, TRENIN MINE TO KEEP OR KILL
IF NEED BE, YOU ABOMINATION, FOREVER.
NO LONGER WILL JUSTICE SERVE --
YOU WILL DIE
I CAN HURT YOU THROUGH HIM
AND I KNOW WHERE YOU HIDE HIM
CAN YOU WATCH AND WAIT FOREVER?

RE ARM VA LT.
LC K
PERSHA!
YES PYREM?
YOU'VE WON
WONDERFUL!
WYTURE IT WORKED!
PYREM'S OFF TO RESCUE MOTHER!
WITH *TWO* OF ALTWAALS WEAPONS, HE'LL FIND IT AN EASY TASK.
ONCE THEY'RE TOGETHER AGAIN, THINGS WILL JUST *NATURALLY* WORK OUT TO KEEP THEM TOGETHER
YOU'RE *CERTAIN* OF THAT?

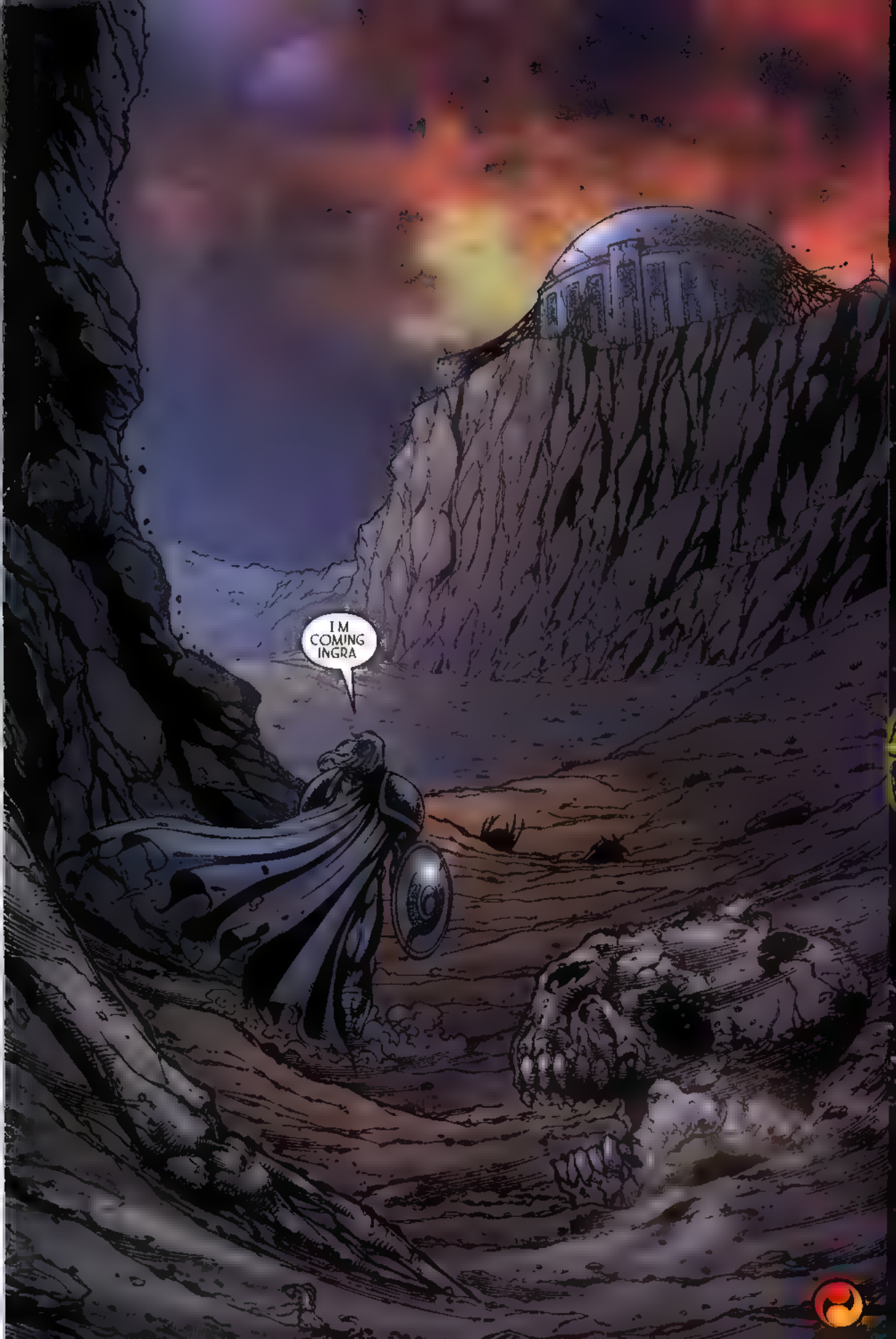
WHY SHOULDN'T I BE?
THE TIE BETWEEN THEM IS SO STRONG
THEY'VE JUST STAYED APART OUT OF SILLY PRIDE
ONCE HE RESCUES HER FROM ERVULSH
SHE'S JUST GOT TO BE GRATEFUL!
UHT! SOMEONE'S HERE!
NOOOO! NOT NOW, NOT WHEN EVERYTHING'S SO PERFECT!
WHO IS IT?
YES WHO?

PYREM?
THIS ISN'T ANY OF HIS BUSINESS!
HOW DARE HE INTERFERE!
YES HOW DARE HE?
ERVULSH!
I'VE COME TO TAKE YOUR CAPTIVE HOME
MUST I DESTROY YOUR WORLD TO DO IT?
RRRIIPT
RRRIIPT
HRAKAHEEN
RRRIIPT
RRRIIPT


IT APPEARS SO
NO!
NO!
NO!


GENTLEBEINGS! YOUR MASTER IS HOLDING SOMEONE PRECIOUS AGAINST HER WILL.
ALLOW ME TO PASS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE AND NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU.
THIS IS MY ONLY WARNING
NO!
NO!
NO!
NO MERCY!!

YOUR CHOICE.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HOUSE SINISTER

HOUSE DEXTER

Centuries ago, **Trenin** returned to House Dexter to present two surprises to the High Council: the head of Tulity and the child **Seahn**. Tulity had tried to kill Altwaal, Leader of all First, but only succeeded in bringing the Golden Age of Elysia to an end. Trenin had kept her son Seahn in a state of immaturity, keeping him from reaching the age of power in order to lure his mother close enough for Trenin to capture. When Tulity revealed that she'd rather kill her child than be taken home to face justice, Trenin vowed not to return her to Elysia alive. Currently, **Ingra** languishes in captivity on Ervulsh's world, but **Pyrem** fights his way through the spider-god's monstrous legions to rescue her...to their daughter **Persha**'s delight. She's determined to reunite her parents, both Leaders of rival Houses.

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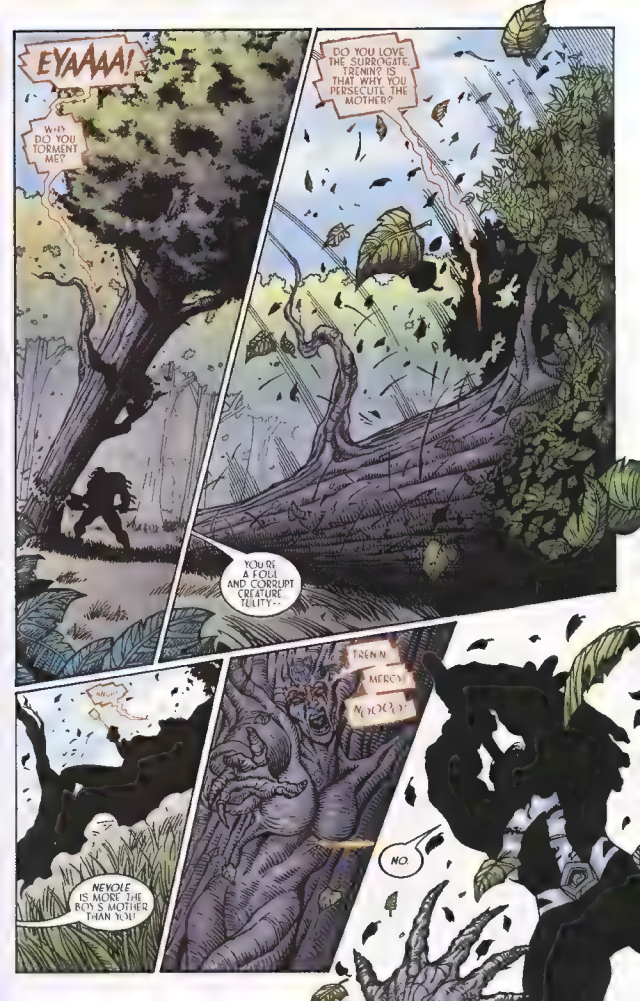
THEY'VE BEEN GONE A LONG TIME, SEAHN
PATIENCE, BRAAG AT LEAST TRENIN'S NOT TRYING TO KILL ME FOR A FEW MINUTES
ENSON HAS HIS OWN WAY OF DEALING WITH THINGS THAT GET IN MY WAY. I'VE LEARNED JUST TO TRUST HIM
JUST DON'T LET HIM SCREW THIS UP FOR US, SEAHN OR I'LL HELP TRENIN KILL YOU
YEAH RIGHT THAT'S GONNA HAPPEN
NEVOLE!
SEAHN!
WHAT'S WRONG?

MY MOTHER IS TRYING TO KILL MEEEEE!
YOUR MOTHRGA!
EEYAUGH!
AIEEEE!
YOU WER MINE!
I GAVE HIM THE HELP INGRA PAID HIM
HELP ME!

ZWPPPT
AAAAAAAH!
SEAHN!
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED -- I'VE GOT YOU!
NO!
I'VE GOT HIM!
THE BOY IS MINE! NO MATTER WHAT INSULT YOU DO TO MY FORM!

TRENIN
SAVE YOUR WORDS TIL TY
THEY'R NOT FIT FOR LAST ONES
KRAK


EYAAAA!
WHY DO YOU TORMENT ME?
DO YOU LOVE THE SURROGATE, TREMIN? IS THAT WHY YOU PERSECUTE THE MOTHER?
YOU'RE A FOOL AND CORRUPT CREATURE TELITY--
TREMIN
MERCY
NOOOO!
NO!
NEYOLE IS MORE THE BOY'S MOTHER THAN YOU!

NOOOO!
TRENIN!
IN FRONT OF THE BOY!
HOW COULD YOU?
I OW COULD I NOT?
WHAKK

SEAHN, LOOK AT ME
LISTEN CAREFULLY TO MY WORDS
YOU SAW THIS
PUT ASIDE THE TERROR AND THE PAIN
DO THIS FOR ME, SWEET SEAHN
-- REMEMBER THE LOVE
REMEMBER ALSO THAT YOU ARE A SON OF HOUSE DEXTER NOW YOU ARE DEXTER'S RESPONSIBILITY AND YOU OWE YOUR ALLEGIANCE TO OUR HOUSE
TRENIN
NEVER MAKE ME DO THAT AGAIN
THE BOY'S BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH
KNOW
BUT THE WORST IS OVER

..HE'LL HEAL
SO WHERE D THEY GO, SEAHN?
HMM
YOUR SECRET?
ENSON'S ACTUALLY, BUT ASK HIM
SO, YOU AND TRENIN HAVE A NICE VISIT?
WE SPOKE ABOUT YOU, SEAHN.
TRENIN HAS MADE A COMPELLING ARGUMENT TO ME
BUT FIRST, THERE'S SOMETHING THAT HAS REMAINED HIDDEN FROM YOU..
...TRENIN?
SEAHN
REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOUR MOTHER DIED
NOOOO!
YOU -
YOU..!

I KNOW PYREM'S OUT THERE
HE'S GOING TO TRY TO TAKE YOU FROM ME, BUT HE *WON'T* SUCCEED
NOT WITH THIS EXTENSIVE WEB NETWORK FEEDING YOU ENERGY FROM ALL OVER YOUR WORLD, ERVULSH
YOU ARE KING HERE
BUT I'M NOT *PYREM*
ARE YOU HAPPY HE'S HERE, NGRA?
PYREM AND I HAVE BEEN ENEMIES FOR *CENTURIES*, ERVULSH
I'VE BEEN PLOTTING HIS DOWNFALL ALL THIS TIME
ALTHOUGH I DID SPARE A MOMENT TO THINK OF *YOU*

BUT ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO PLOT A WAY TO *DEFEAT* YOU!
UNNNGH!

THAT'S THE PRICE FOR TOUCHING ME WITHOUT MY LEAVE
BUT
BUT
BUT INGRA
I LOVED YOU!
A LOVE THAT WAS DOOMED FROM THE START BY VIRTUE OF ITS BEING ENTIRELY
ONE-SIDED

UNH!
YOU WEREN'T AS STRONG AS I EXPECTED ERVULISH
PITY
NNNHH!
PITY ME?
ERVULISH
YOU WITCH!
I HATE YOU!
YOU'RE NOT FIT TO BE MY QUEEN ANYMORE!
NOW YOU'RE
YOU'RE DUST

...PREY!
NO?
OH, NO! NO FOOLING ME THIS TIME!
PLEASE
NOW I KNOW WHAT YOU SEE IN ME...
DIE!
NOOO!
PYREM!
THIS ISN'T HOW I WANTED TO ENJOY YOUR BODY INGRA
BUT I PROMISE YOU--
I WILL ENJOY IT!
RHRRRRHH!

SPLUTCH!
GET AWAY FROM HER
WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSWER ME?
PATIENCE, INGRA
RRRIP!
I'M HOARDING WHAT LITTLE POWER I HAVE TO SPARE
PYREAN!
HAWHRRR!
IS HE WHAT YOU WANT, INGRA?
LNGH!
DO YOU ONLY SEE THE OUTER BEAUTY?
WHMPKRAANNNNNG

I
DON'T
MARK
MYSELF
PRETTY
WHAT
I
NOT
AM?
THAT'S
BUT
THE SHIELD!
TANG
TNG
TNG
MEET ME AS EQUALS PYREM...
DON'T TREAT ME LIKE I'M
PITIFUL!
AND ONLY ONE RETURNS!
PYREM!

YOUR CHAMPIONS LOST WITHIN THE PITLESS PIT, LADY INGRA?
LEAVING YOU TO ME
OH WAIT
THE SHIELD
ALTWAAL'S SHIELD IS MINE NOW!
MIAKKKK!
YOU FORGOT ABOUT ALTWAAL'S GAUNTLET
GIRK GRRRR PRRRK
GET!
POOR CREATURE
HE'S DEAD?
ISN'T HIS HUMILIATION DEATH ENOUGH?
THERE'S NO NEED TO KILL HIM
I HAVE WHAT I CAME FOR. YOU.
AND BOTH WEAPONS I ARRIVED WITH
THAT'S ALL I NEED.

..LOVE

STORYTELLERS

Barbara KESEL
WRITER

Andrea DI VITO
PENCILER

Brad VANCATA
INKER

Rob SCHWAGER
COLORIST

Dave LANPHEAR
LETTERER

COVER INKS BY:
ROB HUNTER

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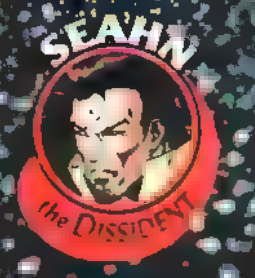
HOUSE SINISTER

HOUSE DEXTER



Seahn has learned the secret of his mother's identity and her death at the hands of Trenin the Hunter, a horrifying execution Seahn witnessed as a child but was commanded to forget...until now. This recovered knowledge is just a prelude to Seahn's death at Trenin's hands. Trenin has tracked Seahn, who now shares the ruling of House Sinister with Brazz, to the heart of Sinister to deliver the boy's punishment for crimes committed against House Dexter. Ingra, the deposed Leader of Sinister, is rescued from Ervulsh's foul world by Pyrem, Leader of House Dexter. Separated for centuries by conflicting beliefs, Pyrem and Ingra have come together again due to the persistent manipulation of their daughter Persha, who sees reuniting the pair as the key to reuniting the divided city of Elysia.

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ENSON, THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING MY SUMMONS.
IT'S BEEN TOO LONG SINCE WE MET IN THE EIDOLON--
THERE'S SO MUCH TO SHARE
PERSHAS JUST HAD HER BIGGEST SUCCESS
IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE EVERYTHING FALLS INTO PLACE
DESPITE OUR DIFFERENCES, WYTURE, YOU KNOW I'M NEVER FAR FROM YOU.
HAVE YOU BEEN WATCHING THE EVENTS TRANSPIRING IN HOUSE SINISTER?
YOUR PERSHA FACES GREAT OPPOSITION FROM SEAHN..

THE ONE WHO WILL RULE THROUGH DOMINATION

LEADING HIM TO ATWAAL'S ROD OF OFFICE SET HIM ON HIS WAY.

ONCE HE'D WITNESSED HIS FRIEND'S DEATH AT THE HANDS OF A SIGIL BEARER, THE UNREST ALREADY PRESENT IN HIM IGNITED A DESIRE FOR POWER

MY MANUFACTURE AND MURDER OF A FALSE FIRST HELPED FORGE SEAHN'S REPUTATION AS A ROGUE IN THE HOUSE OF DEXTER

AS SELF-STYLED LEADER OF THE SECOND GENERATION, HE ENHANCED THIS MYSTIQUE THROUGH MURDERS OF HIS OWN

HE'S AS PERFECT AS I SUSPECTED

BUT HE HAS NOT YET DISCOVERED HIS *TRUE* PURPOSE

HE TOYS WITH POWER

EVEN IN HIS EXCHANGES WITH SINISTER'S LEADER INGRA, SEAHN HAS IMAGINED BUT A FRAGMENT OF HIS DESTINY.

HE HAS NO SUSPICION THAT HIS PURPOSE LIES *BEYOND* ELYSIA

HE REMAINS TOO ROOTED IN HIS OWN MYSTERY, TAUNTING AND TEASING THE MAN HE BELIEVES TO BE HIS FATHER.

NOT REALIZING HE HAS ALLIED HIMSELF WITH HIS SIRE TO OVERTHROW INGRA!

AND WHAT OF MY CHARGE?

SHE KNOWS THE DIVIDED FIRST MUST REJOIN AS ONE PEOPLE

DESPITE INGRAS CONSTRUCTION PERSHA STUBBORNLY CONTINUES THE QUEST FOR UNITY SPARKED BY HER VISION

INGRA HELD HER CLOSE, NEVER ALLOWING PERSHA TO MEET HER FATHER UNTIL I PROMPTED HER CURIOSITY SUGGESTING THAT SHE MIGHT NAVIGATE BETWEEN SHADOWS

NOW SHE CLAIMS GREATER POWER FOR HERSELF--

IT'S ALL IN THE NAME OF BRINGING ALFWAAL BACK TO REUNITE THE FIRST

BUT SHE IS BECOMING COMFORTABLE IN ITS USE

DEEP INSIDE, SHE *KNOWS*.

BY SEEING THROUGH OTHERS EYES SHE LEARNS MORE THAN SHE'LL LET HERSELF ACCEPT

PERSHA WITNESSED OUR JOINING IN THE EIDOLON AS INTENDED, BUT ENSON

--*ANOTHER* WATCHED ALSO

BETRAYAL MAY HALT HER MISSION

STILL, I BELIEVE *SHE* WILL BE THE UNIFIER

WHILE YOUR BOY DISTRACTS HIMSELF WITH HIS FRUSTRATION

SHE CONTINUES TO MAKE PROGRESS

CONSIDER THE POWER OF HER BLOODLINE--

--THE CHILD OF TWO LEADERS, THE PRODUCT OF ANGER AND EMPATHY

SHE IS *STRONG*

WHEN INGRA SPURNED HER NOTION OF UNITY

PERSHA DEFIED THE MIGHTY LEADER OF SINISTER TO SOLICIT PYREM'S AID

BOTH DENIED HER, BUT SHE NEVER QUAILED

WHEN SEAHN AND BRAAG ENGINEERED PYREM'S CAPTURE -

PERSHA SAW THE OPPORTUNITY TO BIND THE SIDES THROUGH HER PARENTS!

AT *HER* URGING, INGRA FREED PYREM

AND AGAIN, BY HER WILL

PYREM FREED INGRA

PERSHA WILL TRIUMPH

NO MATTER *WHAT* ACTIONS THE BOTH MEANINGED MADMAN MAY TAKE!

BLOOD ISN'T AS IMPORTANT AS *WILL*

SEAHN HAS TWO FATHERS

ONE WHO GAVE SEED

HE IS AT EASE WITH THE ONE WHO MADE HIM

..BUT UNEASY WITH THE ONE WHO SHAPED HIM ..

BECAUSE OF A HORROR HE HAS ONLY NOW GAINED MEMORY OF

..AND ONE WHO GAVE GUIDANCE.

NEITHER WILL CLAIM HIM

HE IS THE OFFSPRING OF FUTILITY AND UMBRAGE.

BRAAG HAD TO PROVE THAT INGRA DIDN'T CONTROL HIM

BY USING THE WOMEN AROUND HIM.

HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE DOOM IN TULITY'S NATURE TO INSPIRE HER ACT OF REBELLION

HER ASSASSINATION OF *ALTHAAL* WOULD PRECEDE HER *OWN*, LEAVING BRAAG TO RULE ELYSIA AT INGRA'S SIDE

SEAHN'S TRAGEDY WILL COME FROM BEING BLIND TO THE OBVIOUS

IT HARDLY SEEMS TO HAVE HELD HIM BACK

HASN'T HE, WITH BRAAG ASSUMED THE LEADERSHIP OF HOUSE SINISTER?

HE MIGHT HAVE FOUND HIMSELF CONTENT IN SINISTER'S RULE

BUT THAT WOULD NOT HAVE *PREPARED* HIM FOR WHAT IS TO *COME*.

I CONSIDERED APPLYING DIRECT COERCION--*COMPELLING* HIM TO ACT, BUT WE BOTH KNOW THE POWER OF FREE WILL

AND I COULD THEN ALLOW *ANOTHER* THE SATISFACTION OF *DIRECT* APPLICATION OF MOTIVE

TRENIN'S DISGUST NEEDED ONLY A *SUGGESTION*, NOT EVEN A NUDGE

SEAHN NEEDED MORE PROVOCATION

BOTH NEEDS WERE SERVED

BOTH SERVED ME.

POOR SEAHN

I KNOW I SHOULDN'T FEEL ANYTHING FOR HIM, BUT I CAN'T HELP A CERTAIN

SYMPATHY

ATTRACTION?

THAT'S SEAHN'S GREATEST POWER

HE HAS THE OVERWHELMING CHARISMA OF THE SELF-ABSORBED.

HE INSPIRES AFFECTION.

...FIERY HATRED...

AND WAR.

THERE ARE MANIPULATORS AT WORK BEYOND JUST US, WYTURE

THESE ELEMENTAL FORCES, FRAGMENTS OF ALTWAAL'S MIGHT, WERE GRANTED TO ACHIEVE ONE DESTINY--

--WE SEEK ANOTHER

OUR PLAN DEPENDS ON A UNITED FIRST

I BELIEVE SEAHN IS THE KEY...

>SIGH<

IF HE CAN SURVIVE HIS OWN ASCENSION

I'VE BEEN GONE LONGER THAN I LIKE. I SHOULD RETURN TO MY VIGILANCE

NOT JUST YET, ENSON

SURELY, *ORIUM* MAKES A POWERFUL ENOUGH PROTECTOR FOR SEAHN TO ALLOW US A MOMENT REMOVED FROM THESE LIVES

WE'VE BOTH LEARNED SO MUCH WHILE MENTORING OUR CHARGES

COME

LET'S JOIN
WE WHO ARE ONE HAVE BEEN APART FOR TOO LONG
TIME TO SHARE ALL WE'VE LEARNED

KEY ISSUE

THE FIRST®

Barbara Kesel
Andy Smith
Rob Hunter
Sumi Pak

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They are the First

Immortal godlings, they believe themselves to be the creators of the universe. In their minds, nothing came before them, and nothing equals them. They inhabit Elysia, the bright center of the universe from which they can visit the worlds below to inspire love, longing, and war.

Centuries ago, strife caused the bisection of their city into two parts: House Dexter, home to the selfless; and House Sinister, home to the selfish. The two sides rarely mix; transit to the other House causes a loss of power proportionate to the power held by each of the First. Grand battles have been put aside; political skirmishes, vying for the most attractive mates, and toying with the inhabitants of the many worlds below now occupy the First's days.

Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae who has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently

Persha has come to House Dexter, where she succeeded in convincing her father Pyrem to go to her mother Ingra's rescue. Seahn has taken House Sinister by force through secrets ripped from the mad seer Orium, and is now aware that Persha is always watching.

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WHERE TO BEGIN MY THOUGHTS?
OURS IS AN OLD STORY ITS LIKE OFT-REPEATED
YOU KNOW THE ONE — TWO HOUSES, WITH WARRING IDEOLOGIES LOCKED IN ETERNAL COMBAT
TALES OLD BY *OUR* HISTORY HINT AT TWO FATES
TWO LEADERS
TWO PATHS BY WHICH THE NEVERENDING STALEMATE MIGHT BE BROKEN
THIS IS *ONE*
SEAHN OF HOUSE SINISTER
I SEE YOU

TWO LEADERS RULE NOW WHERE ONE ONCE DID

IN THE BEGINNING WAS ALTWAAL, FIRST OF THE FIRST BORN AND LEADER DURING THE GOLDEN AGE THAT SPANNED FROM CREATION TO BETRAYAL

ALTHOUGH MENACED BY THE THREAT OF ASSASSINATION ALTWAAL WAS BROUGHT LOW ONLY BY HIS OWN HAND

ELYSIA, THE CITY OF WONDERS HE RULED WAS THEN ONE

SACRIFICING HIMSELF IN ITS MAKING ALTWAAL SUNDERED ELYSIA TO STOP OUR WARRING WAYS. NOW THERE ARE TWO SIDES BISECTED BY THE NOTHINGNESS OF THE EXPULSION RIFT

HOUSE DEXTER, HOME OF THE SELFLESS

AND HOUSE SINISTER, HOME TO THOSE WHOSE PRIMARY CONCERN IS THEMSELVES

SIX HOLD GREAT POWER LESS THAN ALTWAAL BUT MORE THAN ALL OTHERS

PYREM, YALA, AND TRENIN OF DEXTER

INGRA, ORIUM AND GANNISH OF SINISTER

IT IS HOUSE SINISTER THAT NOW COMMANDS MY ATTENTION

THE BOY WILL NOT BE HARMED!

TRENIN THE HUNTER HAD COME TO SINISTER'S TERRITORY TO KILL SEAHN FOR LEADING THE SECUNDAE UPRISING AGAINST DEXTER'S LEADER, FROM WHICH CAME MANY DEATHS

BUT DEXTER'S UNSTOPPABLE HUNTER GOD WAS INTERRUPTED IN HIS ACT OF EXECUTION BY ***ORIUM***, SINISTER'S MAD SEER

ORIUM!

HEY!

ORIUM'S TIE TO ***WATER*** WAS A GIFT OF ELEMENTAL POWER FROM ACTWAAL, ONE OF FOUR SUCH GIFTS. EVEN ***GODS*** ARE SUBJECT TO ELEMENTAL FORCES

KRKKKK

TRENIN

I TOLD YOU BEFORE... I CANNOT ALLOW SEAHN TO BE KILLED

YES ENSON

I KNOW YOU'RE GUARDING HIM

LETTING HIM LIVE WHILE HIS VICTIMS LIE DEAD

BUT YOU'VE STILL OFFERED NO SATISFACTORY ***REASON*** FOR THIS UNCANNY PROTECTION YOU BESTOW

SEAHN

TRENIN!

YOU'RE DEAD, YOU ***HEAR*** ME?

NO ***FATHER*** GETS TO TREAT HIS ***SON*** LIKE THAT!

ORIUM'S ATTACK PROVED THAT THE LEGENDARY POWERS HE'D ONCE WIELDED HE STILL POSSESSED

NO, SEAHN

NOT NOW

BUT ***WHAT*** POSSESSED HIM TO THEN ***ATTACK*** THE PERSON HE'D SO FIERCELY SHIELDED?

SEAHN YOU WRETCHED LITTLE

WHATEVER POSSESSED YOU TO ATTACK *TRENIN?*

ARE YOU *MAD?*

ME?!

AREN'T *YOU?*

TO THE EYES OF MOST, THEY HAD DISAPPEARED

BUT I *KNOW* THE MADMAN, AND I CAN *SEE* THROUGH THE EYES OF HIS VICTIM

MAKING IT AN EASY TASK TO TRAIL THEM BOTH TO THE WATERY LAIR THAT HOUSES ORIUM!

A TIME, A MOMENT A SPAN

IN THE PORTION OF THAT *WHEN* IT SERVES ME TO BE

OKAY, ORIUM PLAY IT CRAZY I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE WATCHING OUT FOR ME, BUT WE'LL GET ALONG JUST FINE

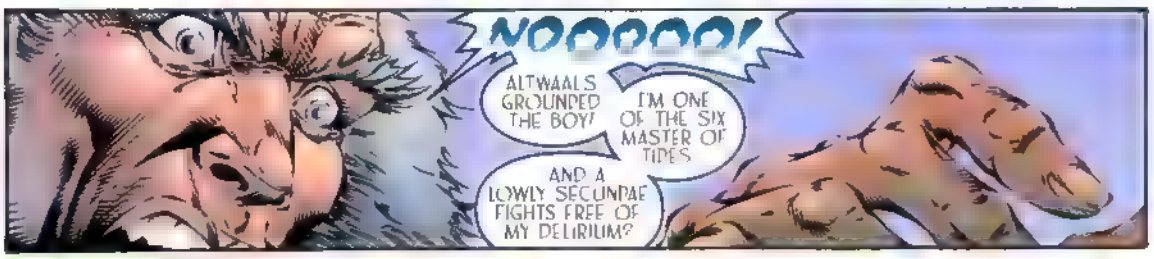
AFTER I SUSS OUT WHAT MAKES YOU TICK

YOU WANT TO *KNOW* ME?

YOU WANT TO *SEE* WHAT STRANGE LIFE *FLOWS* WITHIN MY WAVES?

MY PECKING STACCATO VISIONS COMPEL ME TO PROTECT YOU LITTLE SECUNDAE
BUT YOUR AIR SWILLING LIFE
NOT YOUR TIGHTLY STRAINED SANITY
NEEDS PROTECTING!
SWIM WITHIN MY MADNESS LITTLE FISH!
INGRA, UNTIL RECENTLY LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER
MY MOTHER
YAAAAAAH!!
IHROE THE SENSITIVE DEXTER'S MOST GIFTED SEER
TIENA? HAS THIS HAPPENED OR IS IT YET TO BE?
ALTWAAL OUR LOST LEADER, NOT GONE BUT DEAD TO MY CRES FOR UNITY
EVEN I EXIST WITHIN THESE SHARED FRAGMENTS
I . . . MUST BREAK AWAY THE TIDE OF MADNESS THREATENS TO TAKE ME, TOO

ALL SEAHN WANTS IS TO BELONG TO HAVE A NAME, AN IDENTITY, THE RIGHT TO A PLACE AMONG HIS PEERS
NOT SO FAST MADMAN
HE IS SECUNDAE, SECOND BORN, CHILD OF A RENEGADE MOTHER HE SHOULD BE FORGOTTEN
BUT HE HAS BEEN GIVEN POWER BEYOND HIS STATION THE EARTHWEIGHT AND GROUNDFIRE THIS POWER MUST BE WHAT INTERESTS ORIUM--I SEE NO OTHER REASON WHY THE SEER WOULD PROTECT SEAHN--
ALTHOUGH ORIUM'S WAYS OFTEN LACK LOGIC
--BUT THIS SYMPATHETIC ACT MAY BE A MONUMENTAL ERROR
KNEW?


NOOOOO!
ALTWAALS GROUNDED THE BOY!
I'M ONE OF THE SIX MASTER OF TIDES
AND A LOWLY SECUNDAE FIGHTS FREE OF MY DELIRIUM?

GNNN
BECAUSE SEAHN IN ADDITION TO THE FORCES HE COMMANDS IS BEING SECRETLY AIDED BY SOME FORCE OUTSIDE THE FIRST
THANKS OLD FOOL
NOW I KNOW THE SECRETS YOU KNEW!
WHAT I REALLY AM WHO I REALLY AM
AND HOW TO TAKE OUT EVERY MEMBER OF THE SINISTER ELITE!

BOTH HOUSES ARE RULED BY A *LEADER*, ADVISED BY A *COUNCIL*. *DEXTER'S* COUNCILORS WERE CHOSEN BY MUTUAL CONSENT AND ARE THE MOST WISE. *SINISTER'S* COUNCILORS FOUGHT FOR THEIR PLACES AND ARE THE MOST POWERFUL

ONE BY ONE

SEAHN CONQUERS SINISTER'S COUNCIL, STEALING POWER AND LEAVING BEHIND GODS SAPPED OF ENERGY AND WILL

SEE *GANNISH* ISN'T A PROBLEM FOR NOW BECAUSE HE'S ABSENTED HIMSELF

SO YOU START WITH *MHARROT*, OVERWHELMING HIM WITH SOME OF ORCUS'S MADNESS, RENDERING HIS ABILITY TO STRATEGIZE INEFFECTIVE. STEALING HIS POWER BRINGS SOME OF THAT EXPERTISE WITH IT

ERVULSH JUST LOST A FIGHT TO *PTOLUS* AND *NGRA* SO HE'S RUNNING ON RESERVES ALREADY. IT'LL JUST TAKE A LITTLE INTIMIDATION TO MAKE HIM FOLD

THAT INTIMIDATION, COMBINED WITH MY NATURAL GIFTS WINS OVER *MINITY*

THE COUPLING OF *MINITY* AND *GHIRRETUR* CREATES AN ENERGY SO STRONG

HE *DID* GAIN DANGEROUS INFORMATION FROM ORIUM

MAGIN'S UNREALITY QUIETS *CAHESSE'S* CHAOTIC ENERGY WHICH CAN THEN BE CAPTURED AND STORED

IT AWAKENS THE SLEEPING VIRGINS OF *SYENIESS*

THE SUDDEN RELEASE OF UNTAPPED PRIMAL ENERGY OVERWHELMS THE BODILESS FORM OF *MAGIN*

CHAOS WAKENS THE UNDEAD WHO POWER *IMMOTUS*

WHOSE POWER OF LIVING DEATH BRINGS DOWN *WYEHOLD*

AND SO *FALL* THE *FIRST*, THEIR DEFEAT

FUELING *ME*

BUT SEAHN'S AMBITION IS NOT THE ONLY DESIRE HE SERVES
HEY TRENIN
REMEMBER ME?
HAVING GORGED HIMSELF ON HIS POWNED VICTIMS SEAHN'S VANITY DRAGS HIM BACK TO THE SCENE OF HIS RECENT NEAR DEFEAT AT TRENIN'S HANDS
THEN WE MAY FINALLY SETTLE THINGS BETWEEN US?
WE FIRST I OBSERVE AGAIN AND AGAIN HAVE LITTLE DISTANCE BETWEEN OUR PASSIONS
LOVE BLEEDS QUICKLY INTO HATE
NO. THAT'S NOT IT
WHY, TRENIN?

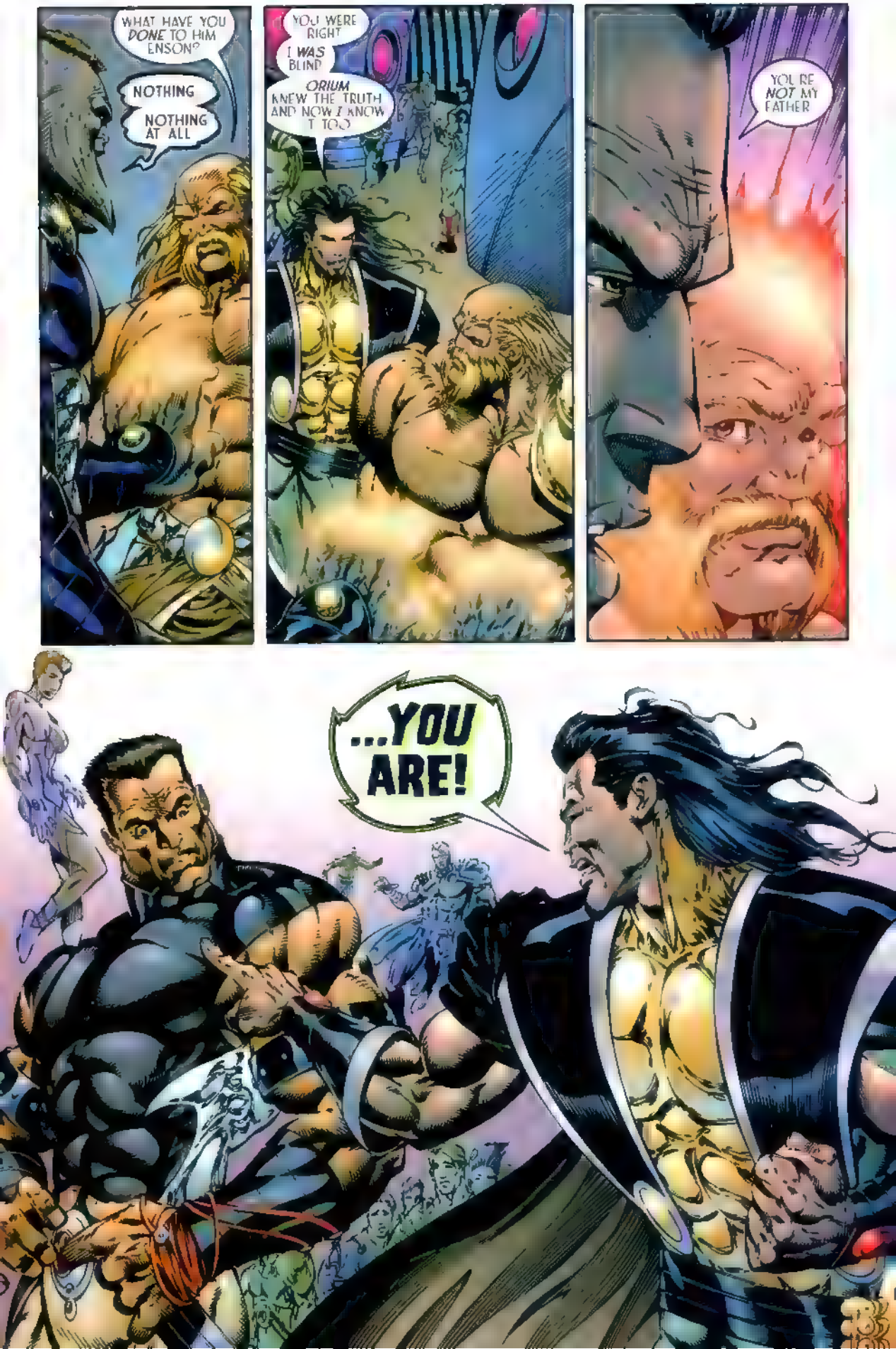
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME WONDERING?
WHY KEEP THE NAME OF MY FATHER FROM ME?
WERE YOU THAT ASHAMED OF KILLING MY MOTHER?
WHAT
WAS GAINED
BY KEEPING ME
IN THE DARK?!

WHY, TRENIN?

SEANN

AREN'T YOU GOING TO FINISH--?
SEND HIM HOME, ENSON
BACK TO HOUSE DEXTER NOW
WHY?

HE'S NOT WORTH MY TIME


WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM ENSON?
NOTHING
NOTHING AT ALL
YOU WERE RIGHT
I WAS BLIND
ORIUM KNEW THE TRUTH AND NOW I KNOW IT TOO
YOU RE NOT MY FATHER
...YOU ARE!

ME?
YOU REALLY DIDN'T *KNOW*, DID YOU?
ORUM AND INGRA KNEW -- *TULITY* LOVED YOU MORE THAN LIFE AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN CARE. IT WAS JUST NOTHING MORE THAN PLEASURE TO YOU.
INGRA KNEW, huh?
THEN THAT'S WHY SHE SAID
NOT THAT I HAVEN'T INDULGED. THEY TEND TO FLOCK TO ME TOO. ALL THE SWEET NIGHTS, NO NEED TO MESS WITH THEM AFTERWARDS.
YEAH. IT'S IN YOUR *BLOOD*.
MY BLOOD. LIKE FATHER.

LIKE NOTHING!

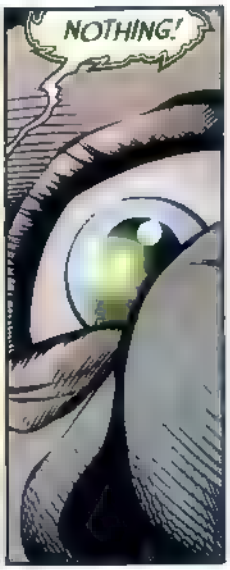
I'M NOT YOUR SON!

I HAVE NO MOTHER!
I HAVE NO FATHER!

I'M JUST THE PRODUCT OF TWO HUMPING ANIMALS!
CREATING ME MEANT NOTHING!

YOU

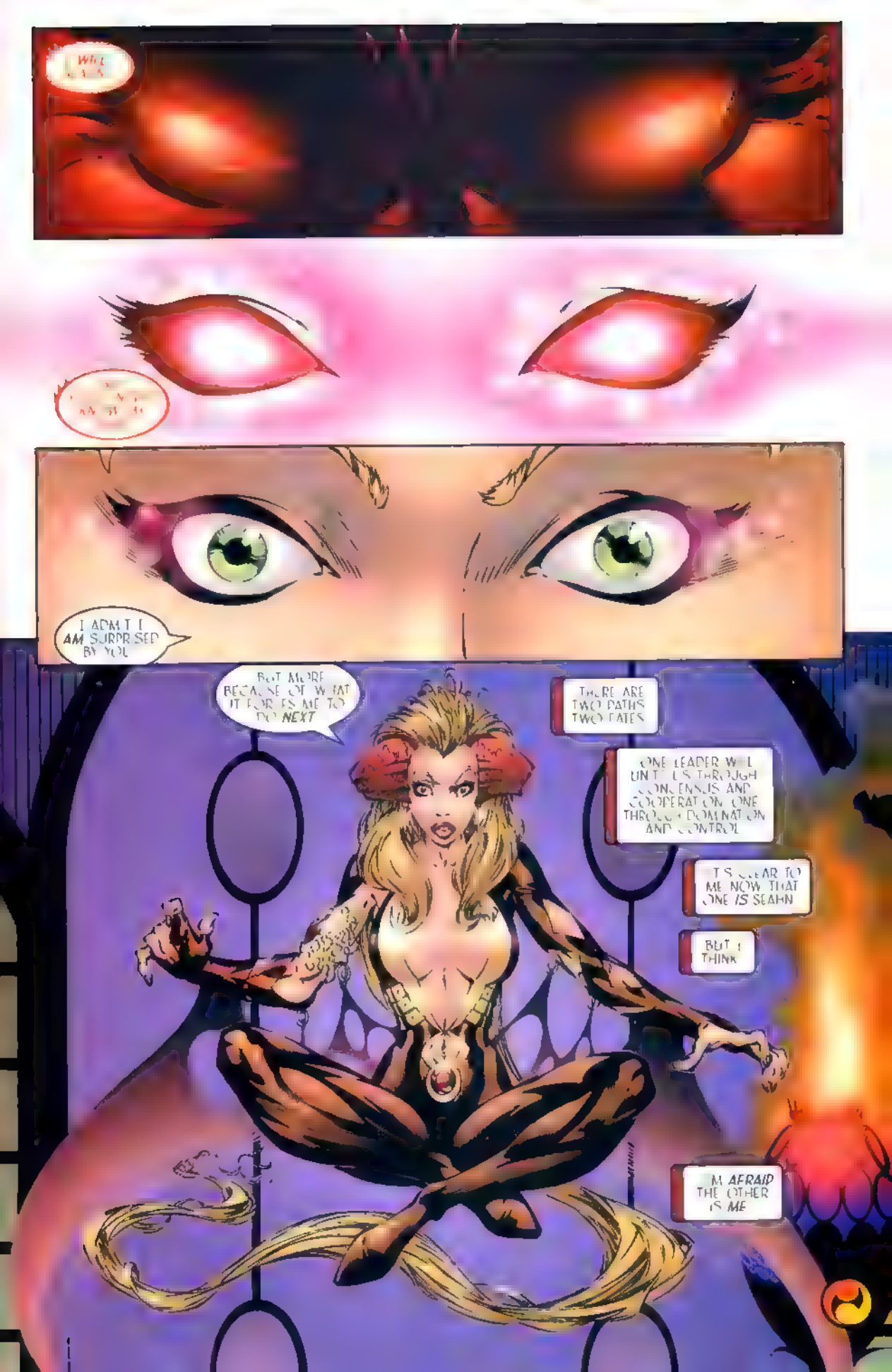
MADE ME


NOTHING!

NOTHING
EXCEPT
ONE

...YOUR DEATH!

SO MUCH FOR US RULING SINISTER
I LEARNED SOMETHING ELSE FROM ORUM, PERSHA!
I KNOW YOU CAN SEE ME. I BET YOU'RE WATCHING RIGHT NOW
LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?
KEEP WATCHING


I ADMIT I AM SURPRISED BY YOU
BUT MORE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT FORCES ME TO DO NEXT
THERE ARE TWO PATHS TWO FATES
ONE LEADER WILL UNITE US THROUGH CONSENSUS AND COOPERATION ONE THROUGH DOMINATION AND CONTROL
IT IS CLEAR TO ME NOW THAT ONE IS SEAHN
BUT I THINK
I'M AFRAID THE OTHER IS ME

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THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel
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Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae who has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently

Seahn has taken violent control of House Sinister first by overpowering the Sinister High Council and murdering his father, Braag. Persha has been witness to these events, with Seahn now aware that she can watch his every move. Persha returns to the Dexter council with renewed determination to lead the First to unity.

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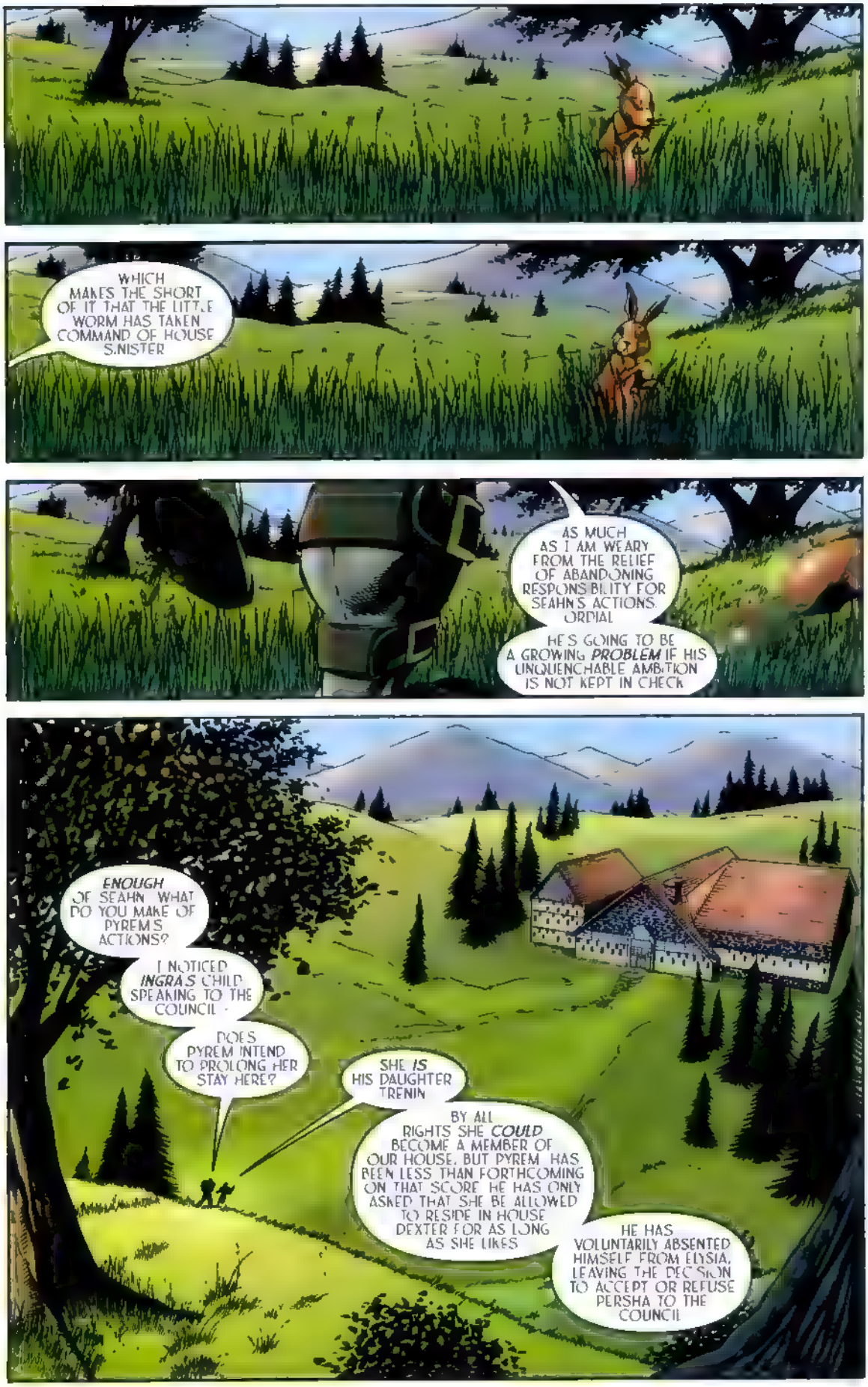
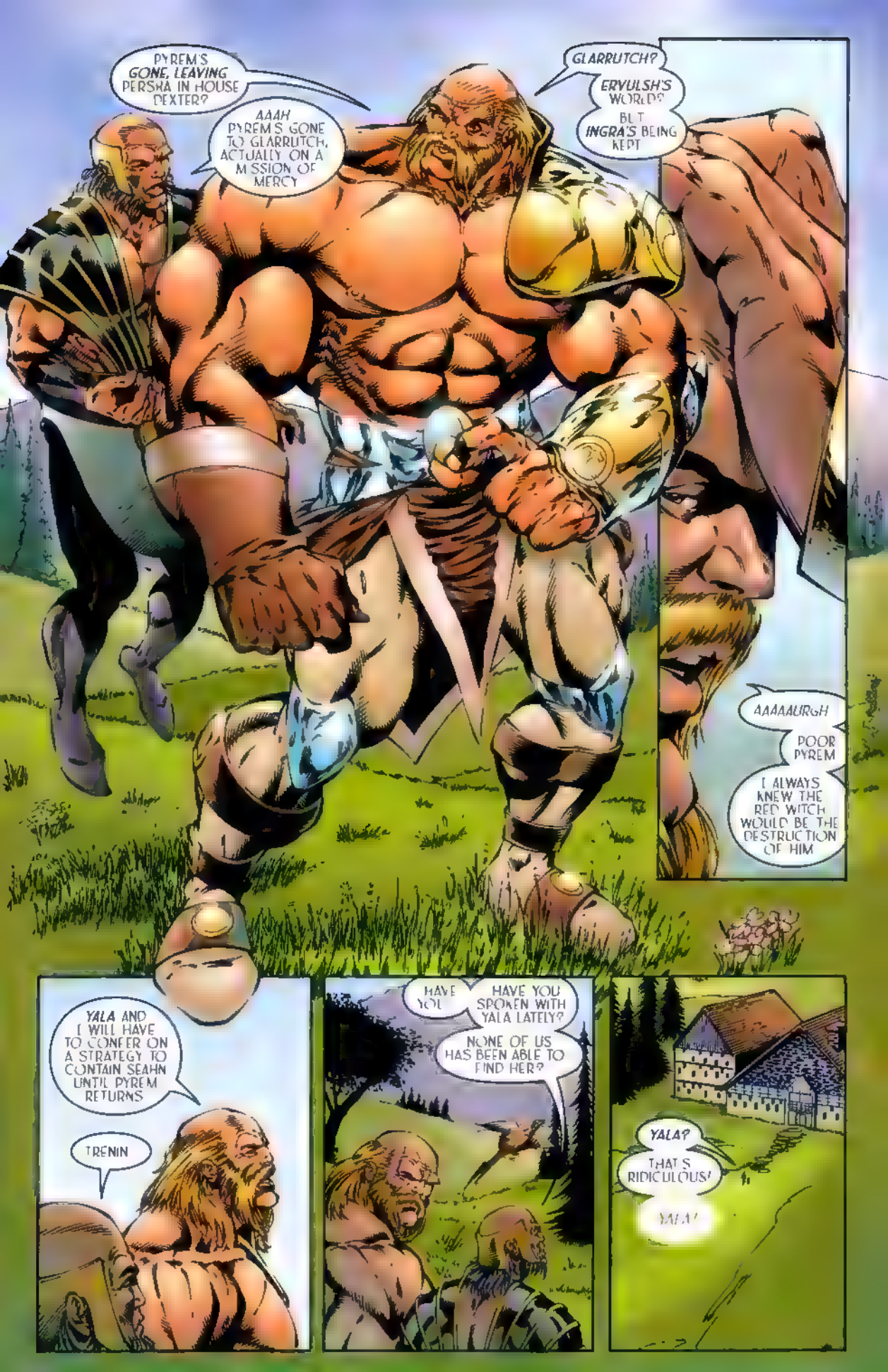
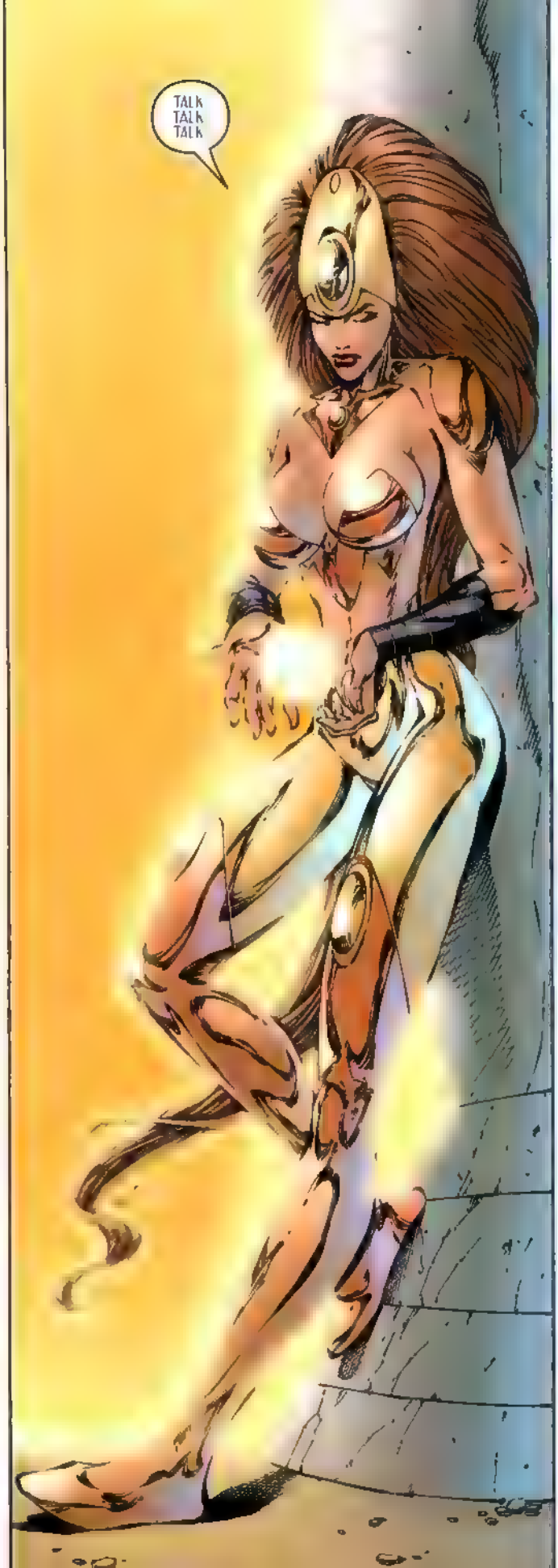
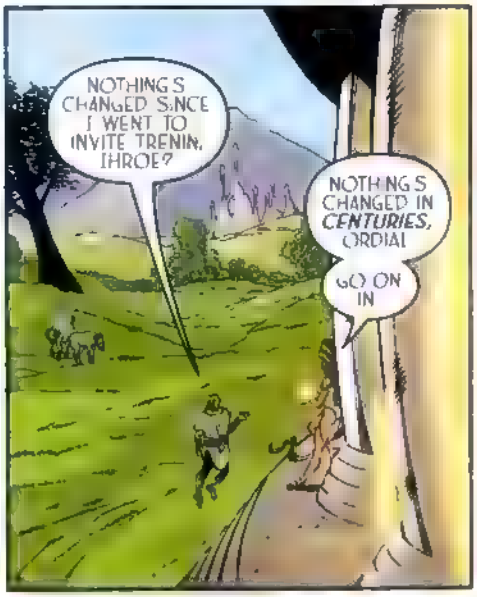

WHICH MAKES THE SHORT OF IT THAT THE LITTLE WORM HAS TAKEN COMMAND OF HOUSE SINISTER
AS MUCH AS I AM WEARY FROM THE RELIEF OF ABANDONING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SEAHN'S ACTIONS. ORDIAL
HE'S GOING TO BE A GROWING *PROBLEM* IF HIS UNQUENCHABLE AMBITION IS NOT KEPT IN CHECK
ENOUGH OF SEAHN. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF PYREM'S ACTIONS?
I NOTICED *INGRA'S* CHILD SPEAKING TO THE COUNCIL -
DOES PYREM INTEND TO PROLONG HER STAY HERE?
SHE *IS* HIS DAUGHTER TRENIN
BY ALL RIGHTS SHE *COULD* BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR HOUSE. BUT PYREM HAS BEEN LESS THAN FORTHCOMING ON THAT SCORE. HE HAS ONLY ASKED THAT SHE BE ALLOWED TO RESIDE IN HOUSE DEXTER FOR AS LONG AS SHE LIKES.
HE HAS VOLUNTARILY ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM ELYSIA, LEAVING THE DECISION TO ACCEPT OR REFUSE PERSHA TO THE COUNCIL.


PYREM'S GONE, LEAVING PERSHA IN HOUSE DEXTER?
AAAH PYREM'S GONE TO GLARRUTCH, ACTUALLY ON A MISSION OF MERCY
GLARRUTCH?
ERVULSH'S WORLD?
BUT INGRA'S BEING KEPT
AAAAAURGH
POOR PYREM
I ALWAYS KNEW THE RED WITCH WOULD BE THE DESTRUCTION OF HIM
YALA AND I WILL HAVE TO CONFER ON A STRATEGY TO CONTAIN SEAHN UNTIL PYREM RETURNS
TRENIN
HAVE YOU
HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH YALA LATELY?
NONE OF US HAS BEEN ABLE TO FIND HER?
YALA?
THAT'S RIDICULOUS!
YALA!

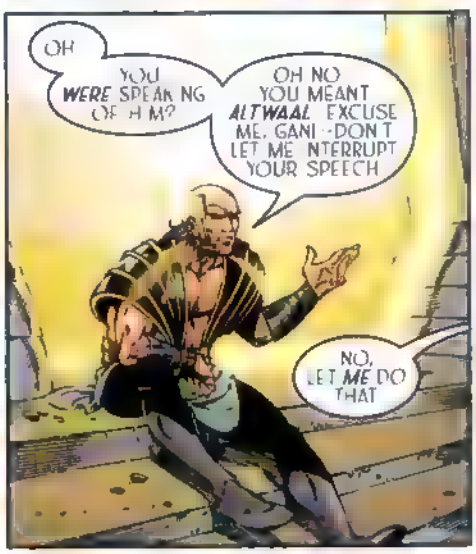
NOTHING.
SHE'S OFF WITH GANNISH, ISN'T SHE?
NO ONE KNOWS FOR CERTAIN.
SHE TOLD HER STAFF SHE'D BE GONE FOR A TIME, ASSIGNED NEW TRAINERS TO HER STUDENTS, AND LEFT WITHOUT INFORMING THE COUNCIL.
HRRRNNNN
TRENIN, WHAT TOOK PLACE OVER IN HOUSE SINISTER?
WHAT COULD HAVE MADE YOU LEAVE OFF YOUR HUNT?
RRRRRR
ASK ENSON
WHA...?
WHAM
ENSON?
THE SECUNDAE?
TRENIN...?

WHY, NO, ORDIAL
I WOULDN'T CARE TO HAVE YOU COME IN AND DISCUSS T
DO EXCUSE ME NOW, ORD AL
WHY, YES, TRENIN
I CAN SEE IT'S NOT THE BEST TIME
=SIGH=
I'LL GO TELL THE OTHERS THAT YOU'RE INDULGING A LITTLE TANTRUM
HMMPH IF I COULD
AS USUAL, I'LL SAY NOTHING OF THE SORT
EVER THE COURTEOUS ONE
=SIGH=
ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH


TALK
TALK
TALK


NOTHING S CHANGED S.NCE I WENT TO INVITE TRENIN, IHROE?
NOTHING S CHANGED IN CENTURIES, ORDIAL
GO ON IN

MY THANKS TO THE SENTRY IHROE
HOW EVER YOU COERCED RAAMIA INTO ENDORSING THIS FICTION OF THE MIRACULOUSLY RETURNED LEADER--!
HE S RETURNED, BUT TRENIN WON'T BE JO NING US!


OH
YOU WERE SPEAK NG OF H M?
OH NO YOU MEANT ALTWAAL EXCUSE ME, GANI --DON T LET ME NTERRUPT YOUR SPEECH
NO, LET ME DO THAT

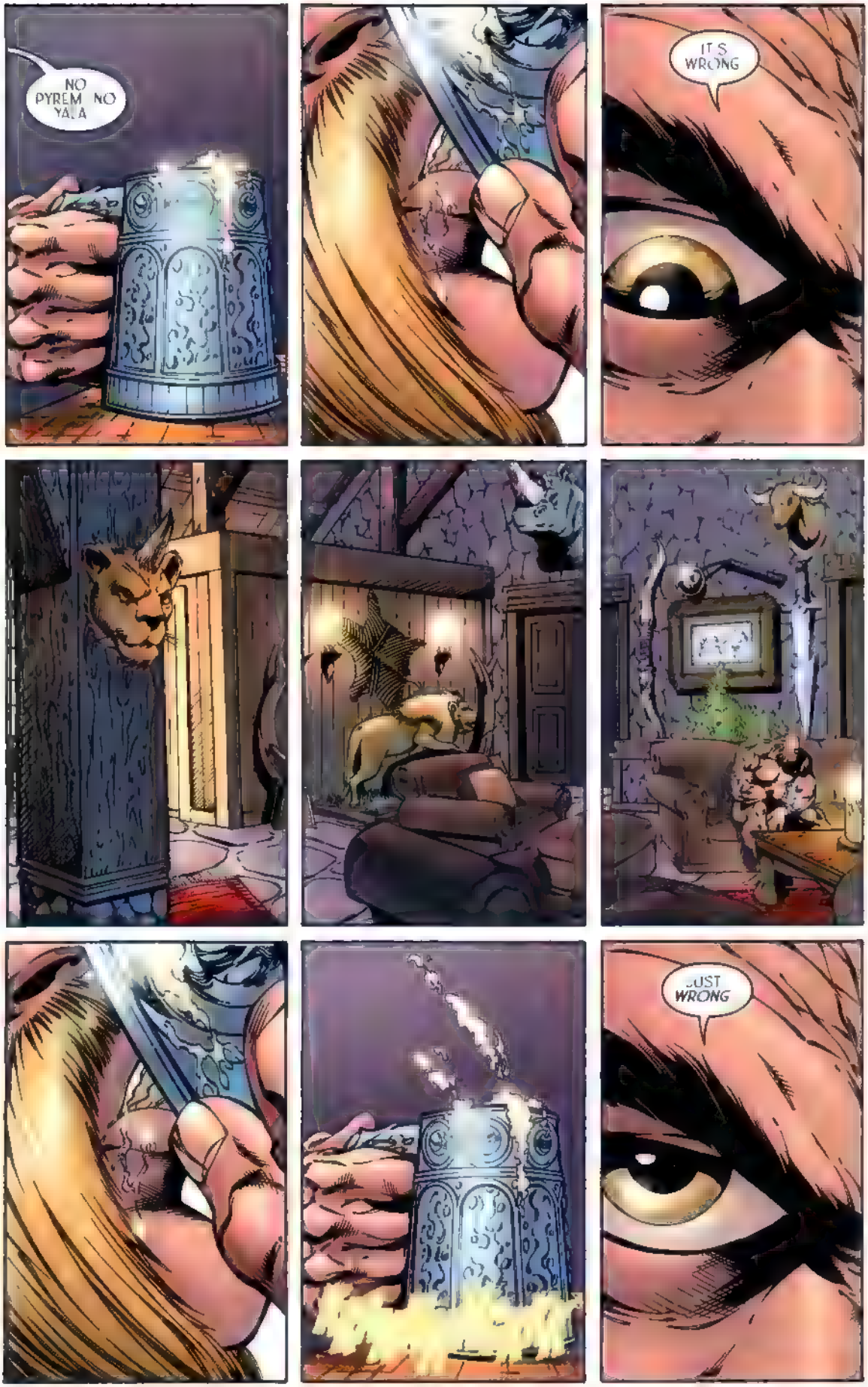
I'VE SUFFERED THROUGH *DAYS* OF YOUR DEBATES. I *KNOW* YOU DON'T WANT TO BE PUSHED INTO CONFLICT. BUT WE FACE TWO DANGERS YOU'RE REFUSING TO FACE!
ONE IS THE *SIGIL-BEARERS*. HAVE YOU TRULY *THOUGHT* ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FACED WITH BEINGS WHO CAN STEAL *OUR* POWER?
BUT THE MORE IMMEDIATE DANGER IS SINISTER'S NEW SELF-STYLED LEADER
SINISTER POWER GAMES. NOTHING MORE
YOUR OWN MOTHER WAS JUST AS RUTHLESS WHEN SHE OUSTED ORIUM FROM THE LEADER'S ROLE
MY MOTHER MADE A CHAOTIC BAND OF WARRING STRANGERS INTO A UNITED HOUSE
WHERE YOU SEE GAMES, I SEE *STRATEGY*
I SEE YOUTH, IMPATIENCE AND INEXPERIENCE
SEAHN IS A NUISANCE, NOT A THREAT
OH?
SEAHN'S ASCENDANCE A *SECUNDAE* SUDDENLY ABLE TO BEST A HOUSE COUNCIL?

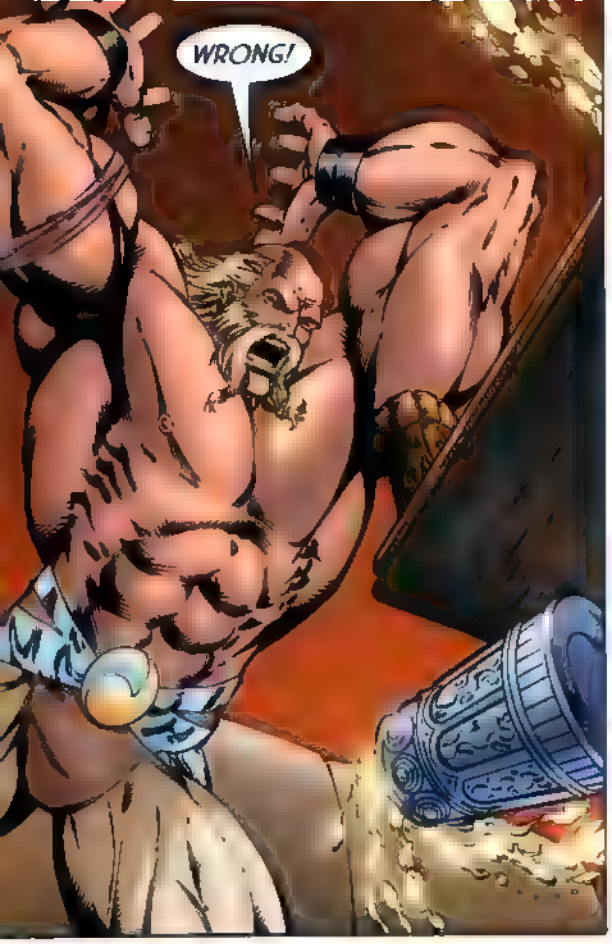
YOU'VE ALL MET SEAHN
DON'T THE SEERS AMONG YOU SEE WHAT I DO?
WHO AMONG YOU HAS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS PHENOMENON?
WHEN YOU VIEW IT THAT WAY
WILL NONE OF YOU LISTEN TO ME?
HMMM?
Dramatics ARE mine, LITTLE GIRL
AND, speaking OF YOUR MOTHER...

WERE YOU?
OF COURSE

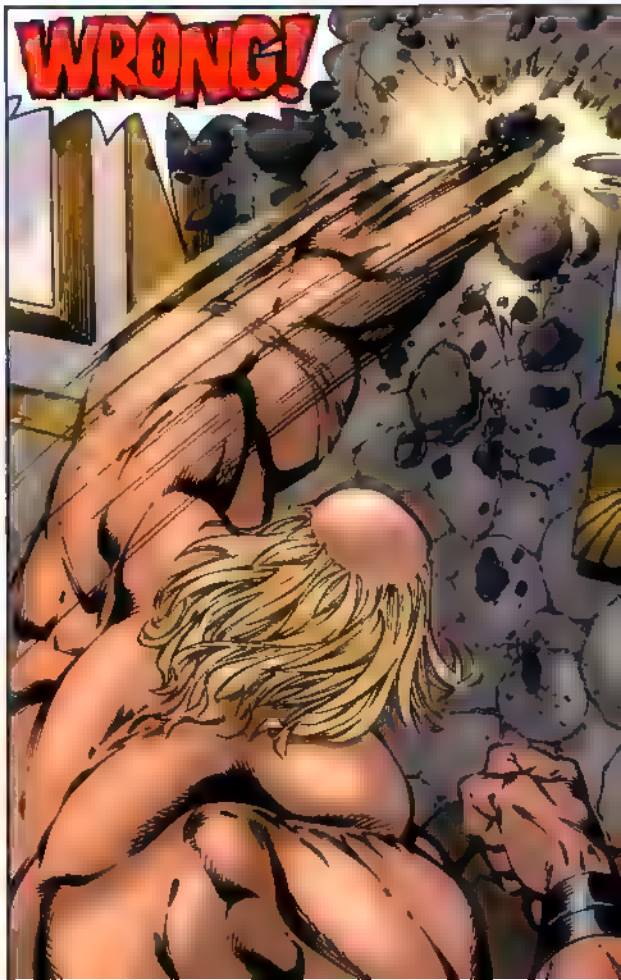
PYREM!
YOU !
SHE !
ANTEM! HE S BROUGHT THE DESTROYER INTO OUR MIDST!
SO I SEE
BUT I DIDN T SEE THIS
DIDN T I SUGGEST YOU GO FIRST AND WARN THEM?
WHY? THEY HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM YOU
IF I MAY HAVE YOUR EARS MY COUNCIL
AS YOU MIGHT SUSPECT GIVEN MY GUEST S FAMILIAR VISAGE, I HAVE A PATENT INDULGENCE TO ASK OF YOU.

MOTHER?
ARE YOU SINCERE OR ARE WEAPONS NEEDED
LIKE THE GAUNTLET I OFFERED UP TO HELP SAVE YOU?
IT WAS ALWAYS SO GOOD TO SEE THEY'RE NO LONGER BLIND TO IT
THEN act SURPRISED ORDIA DON'T cheat INGRA OF THE JOY OF SHOCKING US
I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED MUCH IN OUR UNENDING HISTORY
AS GENERAL OF ARMIES AND LEADER OF DEXTER I HAVE SERVED MY FELLOW FIRST WITHOUT THOUGHT OR EXPECTATION OF REWARD
I THOUGHT I WAS CONTENT
BUT THESE TURBULENT DAYS HAVE BROUGHT MY ONE UNREALIZED DESIRE INTO PAINFUL FOCUS
I MASKED DESIRE WITH ANIMOSITY BUT NO MORE
NOW I WANT ONLY TO BE ABLE TO SHARE MY LIFE WITH THE ONE WOMAN I DID AND WILL ALWAYS LOVE
SO I ASK YOU TO GRACIOUSLY ACCEPT HER PRESENCE
TO DO ANY LESS BETRAYS OUR WELCOMING WAYS
HOW--
HOW COULD YOU DO THIS, PYREM!
SHE'S CONTROLLING YOU!
WATCH HER CAREFULLY!
PREPARE TO DEFEND OUR HOUSE!
THIS IS AN ATTACK!
THIS IS
AN ABOMINATION!


NO PYREM NO YALA
IT S WRONG
JUST WRONG


WRONG!

WRONG!


WRONG!

YOU WERE RIGHT, PERSHA
PYREM S SAYING INGRA DID BRING THEM TOGETHER
YES BUT THE DEXTER COUNCIL DOESN T SEEM TOO INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT SHE S HERE WITHOUT A SINISTER MOTIVE
PYREM, YOU BRING US INGRA AND ASK US TO ACCEPT HER?
I WORKED FOR GENERATIONS TO FOSTER PEACE BETWEEN THE WARRING RACES OF ANCIENT AVALON, A PEACE MARRED BY THE APPEARANCE OF A DEATH BRUTE

ARE WE TO WELCOME THE *QUEEN OF CHAOS* INTO OUR MIDST?
HAVEN'T WE ALL KNOWN THE STING OF HER DECEIT?
I KNOW I HAVE
I CHALLENGED THE MONSTROSITY ONLY TO DISCOVER ITS REPULSIVE TRUTH.
THAT SHE HAD ENSORCELED THE RAVEN KING AND TRANSFORMED HIS ONLY CHILD INTO THE VERY CREATURE THAT THREATENED THE FRAGILE PEACE
FORCING THE ROLE OF EXECUTIONER OF INNOCENCE ON ME.
SHE *CANNOT* BE TRUSTED. SHE WILL KNOW NO REST UNTIL SHE HAS *CORRUPTED* US ALL
SEND HER AWAY, PYREM OR BETTER YET--
BETTER YET, HOLD YOUR TONGUE AND LET THE TRUTH BE TOLD
YOU WERE *WRONG*
YOU HAD MEDDLED WITH THE NATURAL ORDER OF AVALON, FORCING AN UNNATURAL PEACE ON BEINGS NOT YET EVOLVED ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN IT

I BECAME ALERTED NOT KNOWING *WHO* WAS RESPONSIBLE I CHOSE THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY OF EXPOSING AND ELIMINATING THE MEDDLER

THAT'S *TRUE.* IT DID HASTEN A RETURN TO PROGRESS ON AVALON

I NEVER SAID I DIDN'T CARE FOR THE LITTLE PEOPLE DOWN BELOW

BUT THEY OWN THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE THE COURSE OF THEIR SIMPLE LIVES

YES. WE SO OFTEN MEDDLE FOR THE SAKE OF PLEASURE, OR TO END BOREDOM

WE *USE* THEM

PYREM! CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S USING YOU RIGHT NOW!

AH, REASH YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THE calm headed ONE WHAT HAS ***INGRA*** DONE TO **SET YOU OFF** SO?

AND WHAT CAN SHE DO WITH NO POWER AND ALL OF US CLOSELY OBSERVING HER EVERY MOVE?

HAVE YOU forgotten THAT *Ingra's love* IS Pyrem?

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN **ALTWAAL** COMMANDED HIM TO GUARD THE **VAULT OF SECRETS?**

IT WAS A **TEST** OF PYREM'S LOYALTY

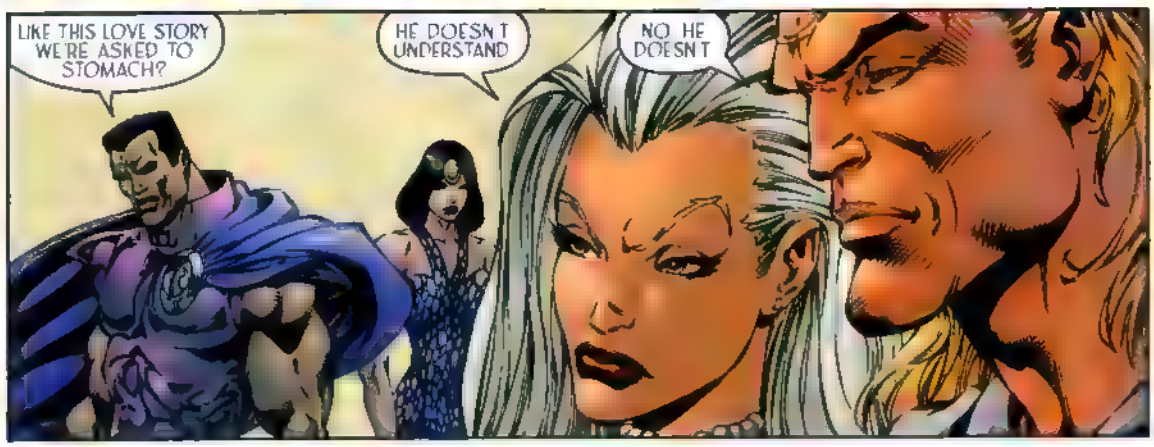
ALTWAAL SENT ALL THE HELLS TO **PLAGUE** HIM

THEN ALL THE HEAVENS

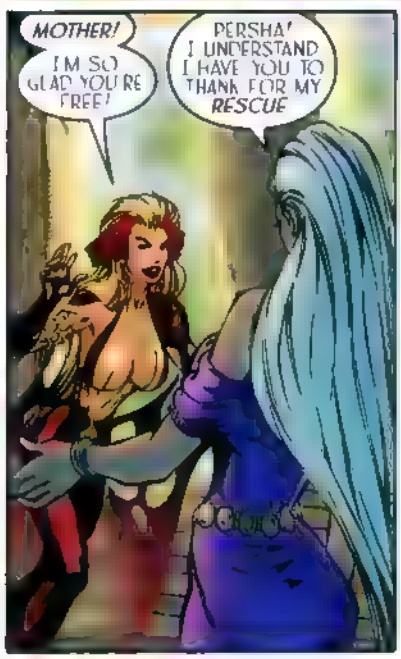
BUT PYREM COULD **NOT** BE *moved* FROM HIS DUTY

THERE WAS NO **THREAT** AND NO ENTICEMENT THAT COULD BREAK HIS RESOLVE!

ALTWAAL COULD NOT corrupt PYREM
SURELY YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT INGRA IS STRONGER THAN ALTWAAL?
That STORY WOULD BE TOO fantastic TO BELIEVE!

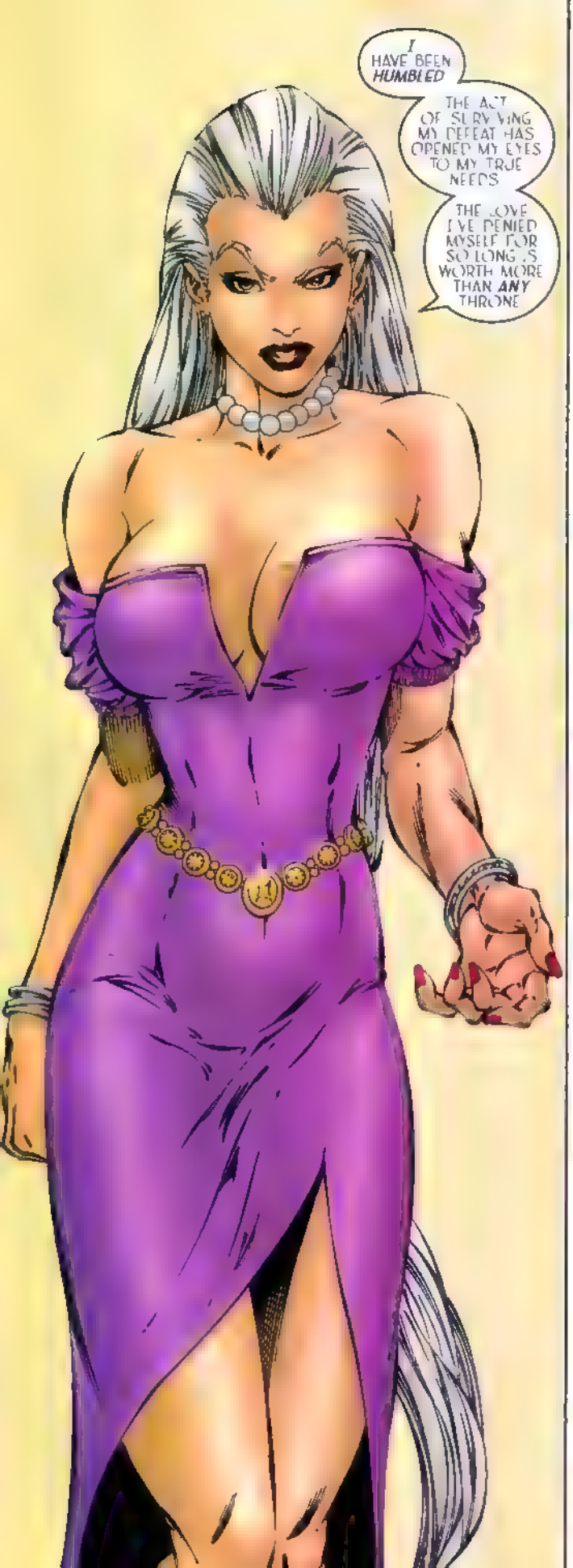

LIKE THIS LOVE STORY WE'RE ASKED TO STOMACH?
HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND
NO HE DOESN'T

WHY DO YOU THINK I CAN DO THAT?
BECAUSE-
OH NEVER MIND

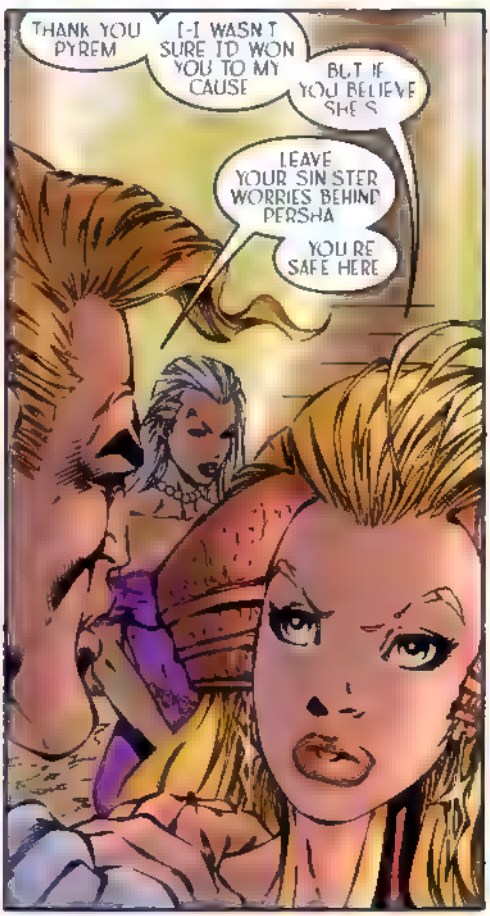

MOTHER! I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE FREE!
PERSHA! I UNDERSTAND I HAVE YOU TO THANK FOR MY RESCUE

I WAS SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T COME YOURSELF

ME?
YOU KNOW I DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO CHALLENGE A MEMBER OF YOUR COUNCIL
SO DO YOU INTEND TO REMAIN IN HOUSE DEXTER?
WILL YOU STAY WITH PYREM?
SUCH AN INTERROGATION ARE YOU MY DAUGHTER OR MY COUNCILOR?
OH FORGIVE ME, I FORGOT-
YOU HAVEN'T THE POWER TO BE ON MY COUNCIL
I-
SHE SEEKS TO ENSNARE YOUR SPIRIT IN A FALSE CAGE, PERSHA. IT IS SHE WHO SHOULD FEAR YOUR POWER
OH MOTHER
STOP TRYING TO CONTROL ME THROUGH INTIMIDATION. WILL YOU?
THERE'S SOMETHING MUCH MORE CRUCIAL TAKING PLACE WHICH RENDERS YOUR DESIRE TO RULE BOTH HOUSES MEANINGLESS
TWILIGHT COMES, AND ONLY A UNITED FIRST WILL SURVIVE!
YOU CAN HELP ME NOW THAT
PERSHA, I DON'T NEED TO TRY TO CONTROL YOU!
YOU'RE ALREADY PRISONER TO A RIDICULOUS COMPULSION


I HAVE BEEN HUMBLED
THE ACT OF SURVIVING MY DEFEAT HAS OPENED MY EYES TO MY TRUE NEEDS
THE LOVE I'VE DENIED MYSELF FOR SO LONG IS WORTH MORE THAN ANY THRONE

BUT I'M AFRAID
COURAGE, DAUGHTER
IF YOUR VISION IS TRUE WE WILL DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO BRING ABOUT WHAT MUST BE DONE


THANK YOU PYREM
I-I WASN'T SURE I'D WON YOU TO MY CAUSE
BUT IF YOU BELIEVE SHE'S
LEAVE YOUR SINISTER WORRIES BEHIND PERSHA
YOU'RE SAFE HERE

SAFE
FREE TO THINK PLAN PREPARE
BECAUSE HROE GUARDS OUR COUNCIL RING
AND NOTHING CAN PIERCE HER VEIL OF PRIVACY
SO ALL THOUGHTS ARE SAFE HERE
I SENSE THE CONVICTION BEHIND THIS IDEA OF UNITY YOU PROPOSE
UNITY--
--WHAT?!
AND I WILL BE THE FIRST TO PLEDGE MY SUPPORT OF YOUR PLAN

AAA-
FINALLY MY HEAD IS CLEAR ENOUGH TO MAKE THE SOLUTION PLAIN
IT MAY WORK BUT I'LL NEED ALLIES
NEW ALLIES

STORYTELLERS

Barbara KESEL
WRITER

Andy SMITH
PENCILER

Rob HUNTER
INKER

Sumi PAK
COLORIST

Troy PETERI
LETTERER

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Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently

Persha has gone to Dexter, hoping to find greater support for unity between the two Houses. While she debates with Dexter's High Council, they are all surprised by the return of Dexter's Leader, Persha's father **Pyrem**, with **Ingra**, the deposed Leader of Sinister and Persha's mother, at his side. There is great fear in Dexter that Ingra is there to corrupt House Dexter from within.

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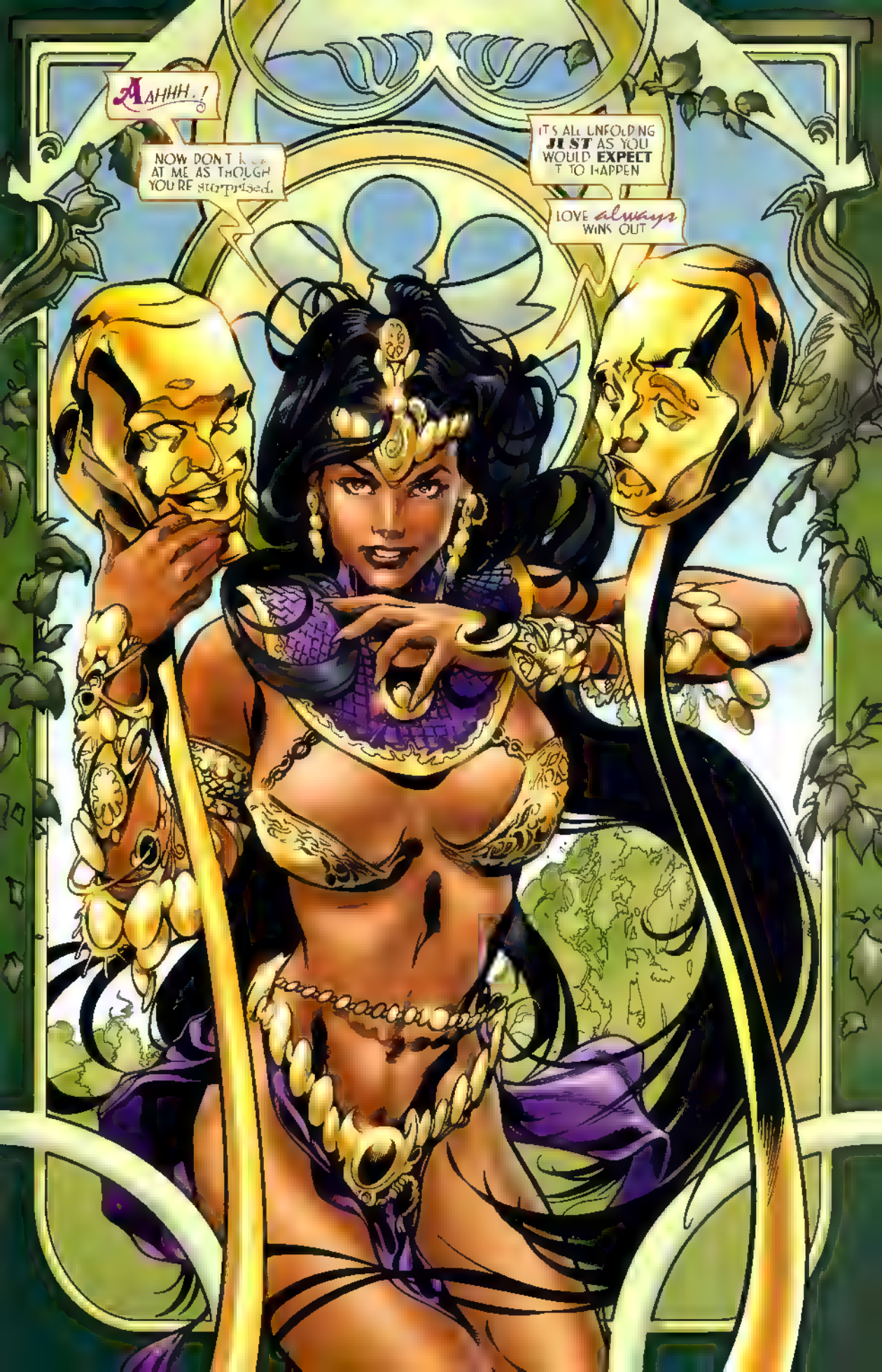

AAHHH..!
NOW DON'T LOOK AT ME AS THOUGH YOU'RE surprised.
IT'S ALL UNFOLDING JUST AS YOU WOULD EXPECT IT TO HAPPEN
LOVE always WINS OUT

I FIND THE **drama** OF PYREM AND INGRA OVERCOMING THEIR DIVISION AS LEADERS OF TWO **WARRING** HOUSES TO BE GLORIOUSLY ROMANTIC!

ROMANTIC?

RAAMIA PYREM HAS *BETRAYED* ALL OF HOUSE DEXTER BY BRINGING THAT VICIOUS MANIPULATOR INTO OUR MIDST!

SCHUUUN, YOU BLAME PYREM TOO QUICKLY

THE RED WITCH HAS CLEARLY FOUND A WAY TO CONTROL HIM

HIS BRINGING HER *HERE* IS PROOF OF IT

WOULD PYREM, OUR BELOVED AND TRUSTED LEADER, RISK IT IF *NOT* UNDER HER THRALL?

NO! HE WOULDN'T THREATEN EVERYTHING WE'VE BUILT HERE

IT'S THE *SINISTER* SIDE THAT'S THE HOUSE QUICK TO *DESTROY*

WE CAN'T LET THEM GOAD US TO *THEIR* WAYS

WISE WORDS, AS ALWAYS, REASH

EVEN SO, IF IT'S PYREM'S OWN INTENT TO KEEP INGRA BY HIS SIDE, *WE* MUST DECIDE IF WE THE COUNCIL *SUPPORT* HIM

OR MUST *DEFY* HIM

PATIENCE, INDORIENNE

REMEMBER OUR CALLING, WE ARE THE COUNCIL OF THE SELFLESS

AND WE'VE ALL JUST RECEIVED A *STUNNING* SURPRISE

LET'S NOT RUSH INTO BATTLE AGAINST OUR OWN JUST YET

I SUGGEST WE MAKE SURE THIS UNION OF PYREM AND INGRA SURVIVES ITS FIRST NIGHT BEFORE WE CONTEMPLATE *ACTION*.

A WORLD FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, INGRA
I'VE NEVER KNOWN YOU TO BE SO SILENT
IS IT THE FORCE OF AWE AT SEEING ELYSIA FROM THIS ANGLE ONCE AGAIN?
COME, I WANT TO SHOW YOU EVERYTHING THAT'S BEEN BUILT IN THE CENTURIES SINCE WE HAVE BEEN APART
PATIENCE, PYREM!
LET ME LOOK!
I'VE BARELY HAD A CHANCE TO CATCH MY BREATH SINCE YOU FREED ME FROM ERVULISH'S FOUL HANDS!
YOU SEE THESE GARDENS EVERY DAY
BUT IT'S BEEN CENTURIES SINCE I HAD A CHANCE TO STUDY THEIR BEAUTY
AND YOURS

NO RUSH
YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD, LOVE
AND ALL THE WORLD I NEED IN YOUR EYES PYREM
INGRA-
YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT STAYING HERE
I CAN SEND YOU HOME AT ANY TIME
I'D ABANDON ELYSIA FOR YOU, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMAIN HERE JUST FOR ME
PYREM
ARE YOU TRYING TO RID YOURSELF OF ME SO SOON?
YOU FOUGHT SO HARD TO BE BY MY SIDE. HOW COULD I EVER LEAVE YOURS?
WHILE BOTH OUR HEARTS STILL BEAT, I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU, PYREM
NEVER

SIGH
I ALWAYS KNEW I WOULD END THIS WAY WITH THEM TOGETHER AGAIN
KNEW OR HOPED?
WAS YOUR SIGHT OR YOUR HEART THE SOURCE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE?
MYTURE STOP BEING A TEASE!
I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LOVE MY PARENTS SHARED
BUT I COULD FEEL IT BURNING THROUGH THEIR EYES
SO CONGRATULATE ME!
THE HOUSES I'VE ONLY KNOWN IN THEIR DIVIDED STATE WILL SOON BE ONE!
HMMM
DO YOU DOUBT ME MYTURE?
REMEMBER MOTHERS INVOLVED
IF SHE DESIRES MY PLAN SERVES HER NEEDS

I AM
NOTHING CAN
STOP

PERSHA?
PERSHA?
PERSHA WHAT'S HAPPENED?
PERSHA
VIHAM, HOLD HER STILL
UNNNH! WHY...?
NOT SO STILL, IF YOU CRUSH THE CHILD OF SINISTER, OUR SECRET MEETING WON'T STAY VERY
EXCUSE THE SUBTLE INTERCEPTION, PERSHA
IT'S BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO CATCH YOU ALONE
I'M RAVACA VIHAM'S THE ONE HOLDING YOU CLOSE
AND, MY FELLOW SECUNDAE
WE REALLY NEED TO TALK

TALK TO US, TRENIN!
I.M TIRED OF WAIT NG, SCHULLJN
LET S GO
BUT TRENIN CALLED US
SOMETHING S WRONG HE SHOULD HAVE STILLED HIS WARDS SO WE COULD HAVE TRANSPORTED OURSELVES RIGHT INSIDE
HE S GOT TO BE HOME
THEN WHY
FORGIVE ME MY FRIENDS
I WAS LOST IN THOUGHT
COME IN
BY H S EYES !

WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE?
TRENIN?
OVER HERE

INDORIENNE
SCHULLUN
THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING MY CA...
WE HAVE A PROBLEM
NO
I HAVE A PROBLEM
ONE I'M GOING TO NEED SOME HELP RIGHTING
I MADE A REPREHENSIBLE MISTAKE YEARS AGO SAVING TULITY'S CHILD
BRAAGS SCION
MY PITY THEN HAS SOWN A CROP OF SORROWS
MY MISTAKE MUST BE RECTIFIED
SEAHN MUST DIE WITHOUT THE DEED'S GRANTING INGRA EASY RETURN TO SINISTER'S THRONE
I CANNOT DO THIS ALONE BUT I SUPPOSE I LACK LOYAL ALLIES
YA AS DISAPPEARED AND PYREM'S LOST HIS WITS
YOU TWO HAVE ALWAYS PROVED LOYAL TO DEXTER
I ASK YOU NOW
WILL YOU SIDE WITH ME IN THIS?

HOW *COULD* WE BOTH HAVE BEEN SO *STUBBORN?*

WE CAN'T CHANGE OUR NATURES, PYREM--

YOU H DE A SOFT HEART BEHIND A STERN FACE

AND *YOU*-- THE PASSION FOR LIFE THAT FLOWS BEH ND YOUR ANGER!

HOW COULD I HAVE LIVED FOR SO LONG W THOUT TS TOUCH?

WILL YOU STAY BY MY SIDE ALWAYS, INGRA?

ALWAYS, PYREM

PYREM?

PYREM I MUST SPEAK TO YOU
NOW, ENSON?
ENSON?
MEET ME IN THE [illegible] OF WORDS
PYREM SURELY YOU DON'T TRUST THAT SCHEMING GARGOYLE?
ENSON'S BEEN--
ENSON HAS EARNED THE RIGHT TO DEMAND MY ATTENTION
OH?
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN LEAGUE WITH THAT MONSTER?
INGRA, YOU'RE IN DEXTER NOW.
CAN YOU NOT SET ASIDE YOUR DISTRUST FOR A TIME?
UNTIL SUCH TIME AS I EARN IT, PERHAPS?
ENSON
YES, PYREM?

CHAFING AT THE LACK OF CONFLICT ALREADY, INGRA?
YOUR STAY IN DEXTER WILL BE A SHORT ONE AT THIS RATE
YOU--!
ENSON!
YOUR CALL SEEMED IMPERATIVE
WHAT HAVE YOU COME TO SHOW ME?
PYREM...
I NEED TO SPEAK TO YOU PRIVATELY
YOU ARE
I WILL NOT KEEP ANY SECRETS FROM INGRA ENSON
WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY TO ME CAN BE SAID BEFORE HER
HMMM
THEN LOOK.

"THE WORLD'S NAME IS FOREST
"THE MARKED MAN IS RIAGLAL
HIS ATTACKERS..
GODS OF THE LIFE BEARING SKY YOU WHO HAVE MARKED ME
GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO DRIVE BACK THESE DEMON INVADERS!
..ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD"
<NICE SPEECH>
<TALKING TO GOD, SIGIL BOY?>
<NICE LAST WORDS>
AWAY, MY BROTHERS!
LEAVE THE DEMONS TO ME AND GO!

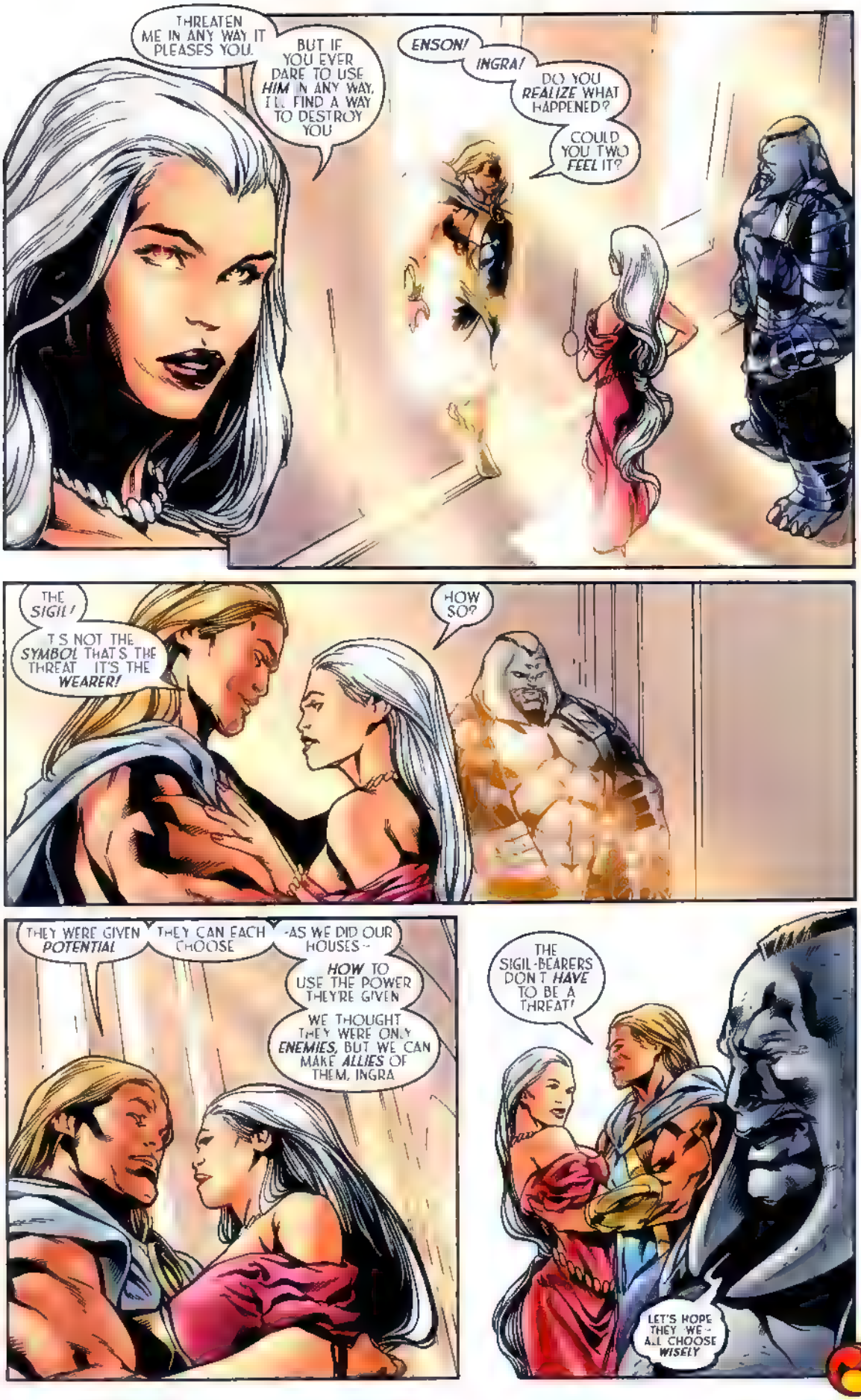
GOOO...
<YOU STILL MOVING??
<PRETTY TOUGH WILL YOU GOT THERE, GUY>
HEED ME, MIGHTY LORDS OF LIFE!
HELP ME, YOUR WARRIOR DELIVER MY PEOPLE!
SHOW ME YOUR LIGHT!
<I'LL BET THAT'S ANOTHER PRAYER
<HERE'S SOME DELIVERANCE FOR YOU>

BEGONE.

ARE YOU WELL?
ARE YOU, REAL?
I'M NOT AS CERTAIN AS I USED TO BE THAT I CAN CLAIM CREDIT FOR YOUR CREATION
BUT YOU'RE WOUNDED
AND I CAN'T ABIDE UNNECESSARY PAIN
EVEN THOUGH YOUR KIND, SIGIL-BEARER HOLDS THE POWER TO --
--STEAL MINE
STAY

YOU ARE PHYREEME, LORD OF LIGHT AND LONGING
ACCEPT MY HUMBLE THANKS, O LORD
THAT'S REALLY...
NOT YOU'RE NOT STEALING A THING
TAKE?
OH, NO. LIKE YOU, I GIVE
I GIVE YOU MY LIFE, MY SOUL... WHATEVER YOU REQUIRE!
I ACCEPT YOUR THANKS- THAT'S ALL I REQUIRE
NOW GO SERVE YOUR PEOPLE, SIGIL BEARER
WITH MY BLESSING
WHAT ARE YOU REALLY DOING TO PYREM?
SURELY THIS INSIGNIFICANT LITTLE BEING'S LIFE WASN'T WORTH THE INTERRUPTION?

INGRA-- AS MASTERFUL A MANIPULATOR AS YOU DOESN'T RECOGNIZE THE STRATEGY IN ACTION?
THE EMPATH HAS JUST LEARNED A VALUABLE TRUTH.
DON'T YOU DARE PRESUME YOURSELF MY BETTER IN ANY WAY, ENSON!
I'VE KILLED FOR LESS!
BUT YOU CAN'T. YOU'RE DRAINED DRY OF POWER.
AND IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE RETURNING WHILE YOU DALLY HERE IN HOUSE DEXTER
WHY ARE YOU REALLY HERE, INGRA?
IT'S NOT FOR LOVE OF PYREM, IS IT?
YOU WILL NOT SPEAK OF HIM
YOU--
YOU DO LOVE HIM!
BUT I ASSUMED.. I THOUGHT I SAW
YOU LOVE HIM
WHY DIDN'T I SEE THAT?
AN ANOMALY?
OR YOU'RE A MORE POWERFUL LIAR THAN I HAD BELIEVED-- YOU CAN FOOL EVEN ME.
I KNOW YOU WON'T TELL ME, INGRA.
BUT I'LL BE WATCHING WHILE YOU WAIT IN VAIN FOR YOUR LOST POWER TO ACCRUE
I'LL TELL YOU THIS--
BELIEVE WHATEVER YOU WILL ABOUT ME, ENSON


THREATEN ME IN ANY WAY IT PLEASES YOU.
BUT IF YOU EVER DARE TO USE HIM IN ANY WAY, I'LL FIND A WAY TO DESTROY YOU
ENSON!
INGRA!
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT HAPPENED?
COULD YOU TWO FEEL IT?
THE SIGIL!
IT'S NOT THE SYMBOL THAT'S THE THREAT... IT'S THE WEARER!
HOW SO?
THEY WERE GIVEN POTENTIAL
THEY CAN EACH CHOOSE
-AS WE DID OUR HOUSES--
HOW TO USE THE POWER THEY'RE GIVEN
WE THOUGHT THEY WERE ONLY ENEMIES, BUT WE CAN MAKE ALLIES OF THEM, INGRA
THE SIGIL-BEARERS DON'T HAVE TO BE A THREAT!
LET'S HOPE THEY WE-- ALL CHOOSE WISELY

STORYTELLERS

Barbara KESEL
WRITER

Greg TOCCHINI
Guest PENCILER

Drew GERACI
Guest INKER

Laura VILLARI
Guest COLORIST

Dave LAMPHEAR
LETTERER

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Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently:

Pyrem has returned to House Dexter with **Ingra**, to the consternation of his High Council. Persha is delighted, seeing their reunion as a sign of a greater unity. **Trenin**, betrayed by Pyrem and abandoned by Yala, seeks out new allies to help him execute Seahn. **Enson** alerts Pyrem to an attack on a Sigil-Bearer. When Pyrem steps in for some godly intervention, the empath is surprised to learn that the Sigil-Bearers are not necessarily enemies, and Enson is surprised by the intensity of Ingra's love for Pyrem.

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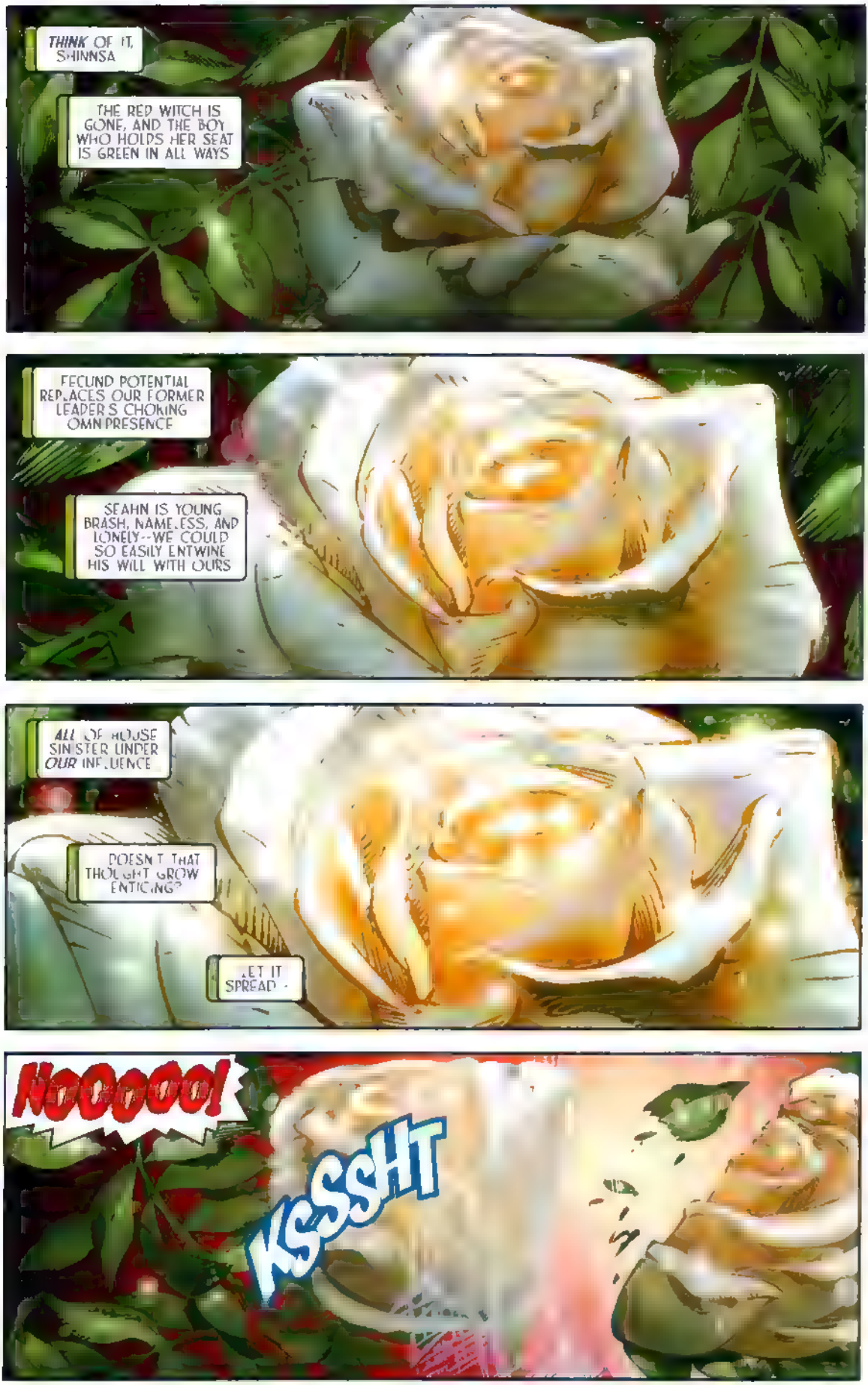
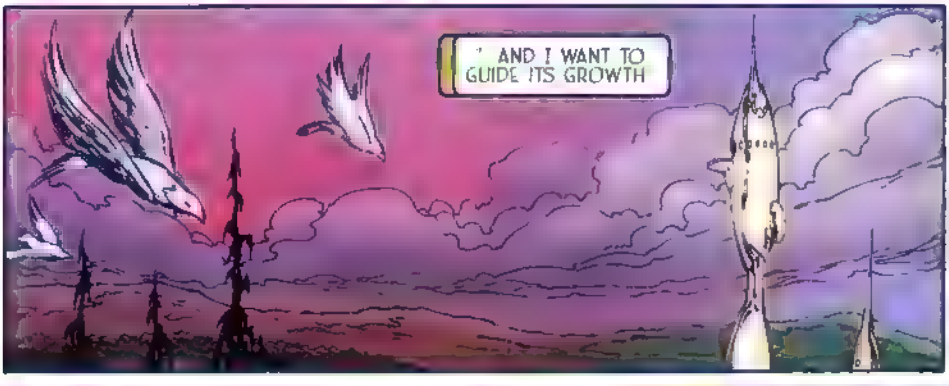
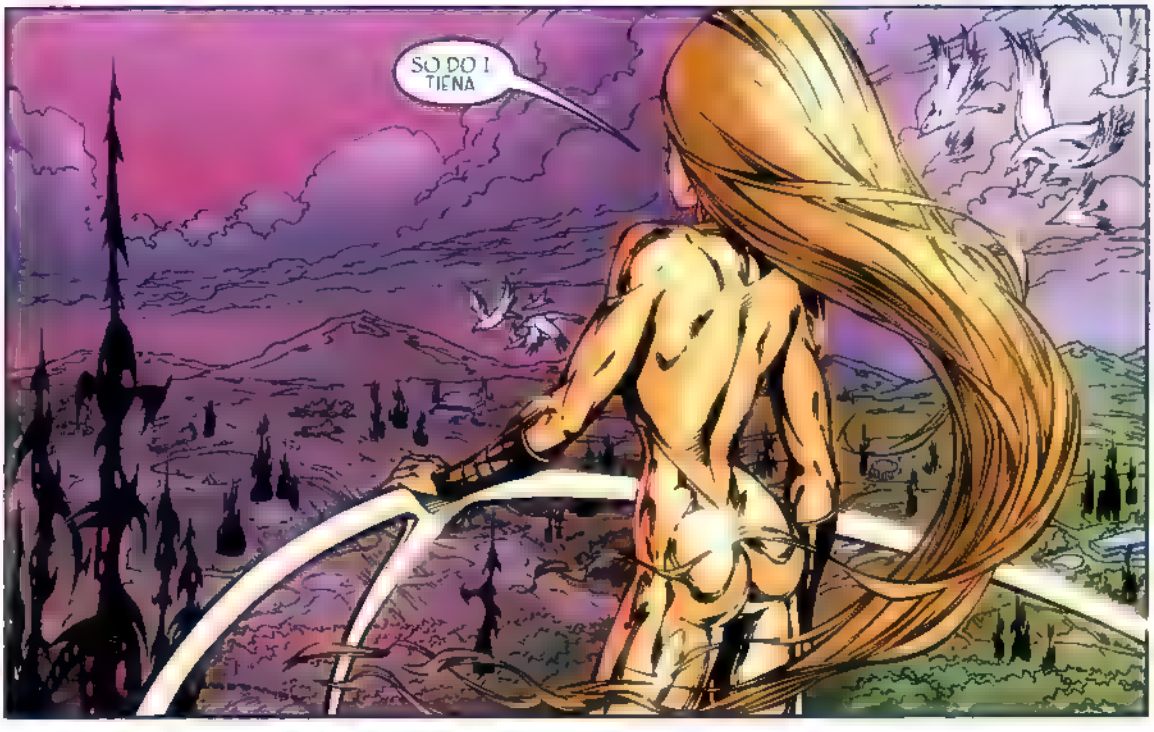

THINK OF IT, SHINNSA
THE RED WITCH IS GONE, AND THE BOY WHO HOLDS HER SEAT IS GREEN IN ALL WAYS
FECUND POTENTIAL REPLACES OUR FORMER LEADER'S CHOKING OMNIPRESENCE
SEAHN IS YOUNG BRASH, NAMELESS, AND LONELY--WE COULD SO EASILY ENTWINE HIS WILL WITH OURS
ALL OF HOUSE SINISTER UNDER OUR INFLUENCE
DOESN'T THAT THOUGHT GROW ENTICING?
LET IT SPREAD -
NOOOOO!
KSSSHT

KEEP YOUR SPELLS TO YOURSELF WITCH!
I SERVE INGRA AND PERSHA. I HAVE PLEDGED MY LOYALTY TO BOTH MOTHER AND DAUGHTER!
DO NOT ASK ME TO BETRAY THEM TIENA!
FOR THE SAKE OF OUR FRIENDSHIP I WILL FORGIVE THIS INSULT BUT I WILL NEVER ABANDON MY DUTY!
NO, NO, SHINNSA. YOU'RE NURTURING THE WRONG IDEA

COME NOW- YOU'VE KNOWN ME ALL MY LIFE I'VE BEEN PERSHA'S FRIEND ALL THAT TIME
WOULD I BETRAY HER?
YOU SPEAK OF JOINING WITH SEAHN, TAKING INGRA'S PLACE?
IN TIME THAT'S PERSHA'S RIGHT, NOT
BUT INGRA'S GONE, SHINNSA
SEAHN HAS TAKEN COMMAND WOULD YOU RATHER I SERVE HIM OR CONTROL HIM?
SHHH
JUST LET THE DEA TAKE ROOT
TIENA !
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
I CAN'T-
SWEET SHINNSA DON'T FIGHT AGAINST MY SNARE JUST BE CALM DON'T WORRY YOURSELF ABOUT IT AT ALL
DON'T GIVE A THOUGHT TO MY PLANS OR THIS MEETING
IN FACT LET IT ALL WASH FROM YOUR MIND

I ADMIRE YOUR LOYALTY MY FRIEND, BUT FIND NOTHING ADMIRABLE IN CONTINUING SUCH DETERMINED STUPIDITY INGRA AND PERSHA HAVE ABANDONED OUR HOUSE
THE WORLD IS CHANGING


AND I WANT TO GUIDE ITS GROWTH


SO DO I TIENA

BUT I DON'T TRUST WHAT YOU'LL MAKE OF IT
FORGIVE ME PYREM
I'M VIOLATING YOUR TRUST
BUT YOU HAVE VIOLATED ALL OF HOUSE DEXTER BY BRINGING INGRA HERE

YOU DESIGNED THIS WEAPON FOR CEREMONY, NOT BATTLE
BUT A NEW KIND OF WAR HAS BEGUN
SO MANY SECRETS, ALL MINE THIS KNOWLEDGE IS ONE FORM OF POWER
BUT TRENIN SHOWED ME THE WAY TO CROSS THE EIDOLON WITH THE OTHER
I MAY NOT BE ONE OF THE SIX
BUT I DO NOT LACK FOR WILL!

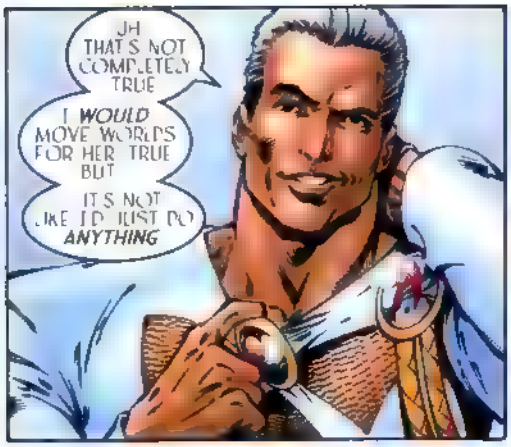
CARRY MY MIGHT ACROSS SAFELY LITTLE BLADE!
WHA-?
WHAT'S THIS?
NO, TOWRIK! DON'T TOUCH IT!
YOU
YOU'RE NOT OF SINISTER WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN OUR HOUSE?
WHY TOWRIK
IT'S NOTHING
NOT A WORRY TO YOU AT ALL
LET IT SLIP FROM YOUR MIND
JUST GO ON WATCHING AS YOU ALWAYS DO, FAITHFUL SENTRY
IT WAS NOTHING
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT TODAY
YOU'VE GOT TO BE VIGILANT THOUGH
THERE COULD BE SOME THING

YOUR TRICK IS DANGEROUS, TIENA
IT'S TOO EASY

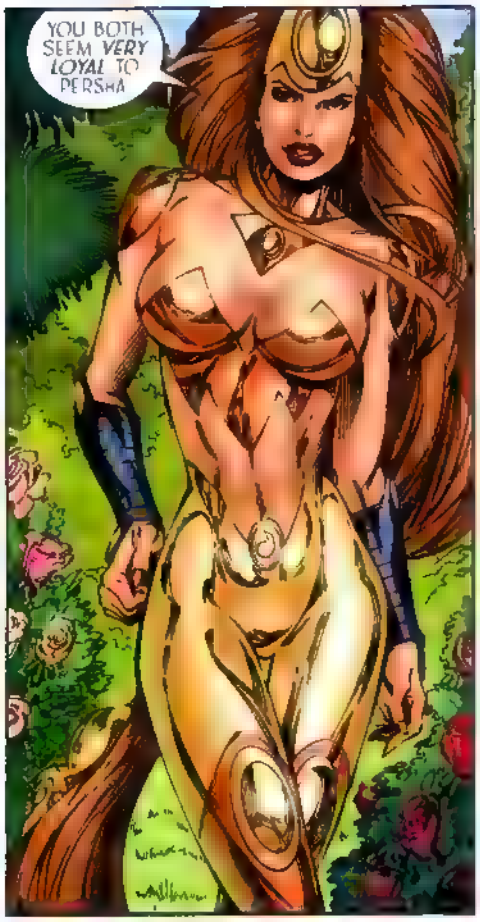
EMPHER! WHY DID YOU EVER GET HERE?
TIENA!
WELCOME EMPHER

WHAT IS IT?
IS IT PERSHA? HAS SHE COME HOME?
NO. EMPHER PERSHA'S IN DEXTER NOW. THERE'S NO TELLING WHEN SHE'LL BE COMING HOME, OR EVEN IF
INGRA'S GONE THERE, TOO
OH, EMPHER, WE'RE CURSED TO HAVE THAT NASTY SEAHN AS OUR LEADER
UNLESS WE CAN FIND THE COURAGE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIM

THAT'S THE *ONLY* WAY TO MAKE IT *SAFE* FOR *PERSHA* TO RETURN
WILL YOU *HELP* ME, EMPHER?
FOR *PERSHA*?
YOU'D DO *ANYTHING* FOR HER, WOULDN'T YOU?


UH THAT'S NOT COMPLETELY TRUE
I *WOULD* MOVE WORLDS FOR HER TRUE BUT
IT'S NOT LIKE I'D JUST DO *ANYTHING*

THAT'S NOT WHAT I SEE


YOU BOTH SEEM *VERY* *LOYAL* TO PERSHA

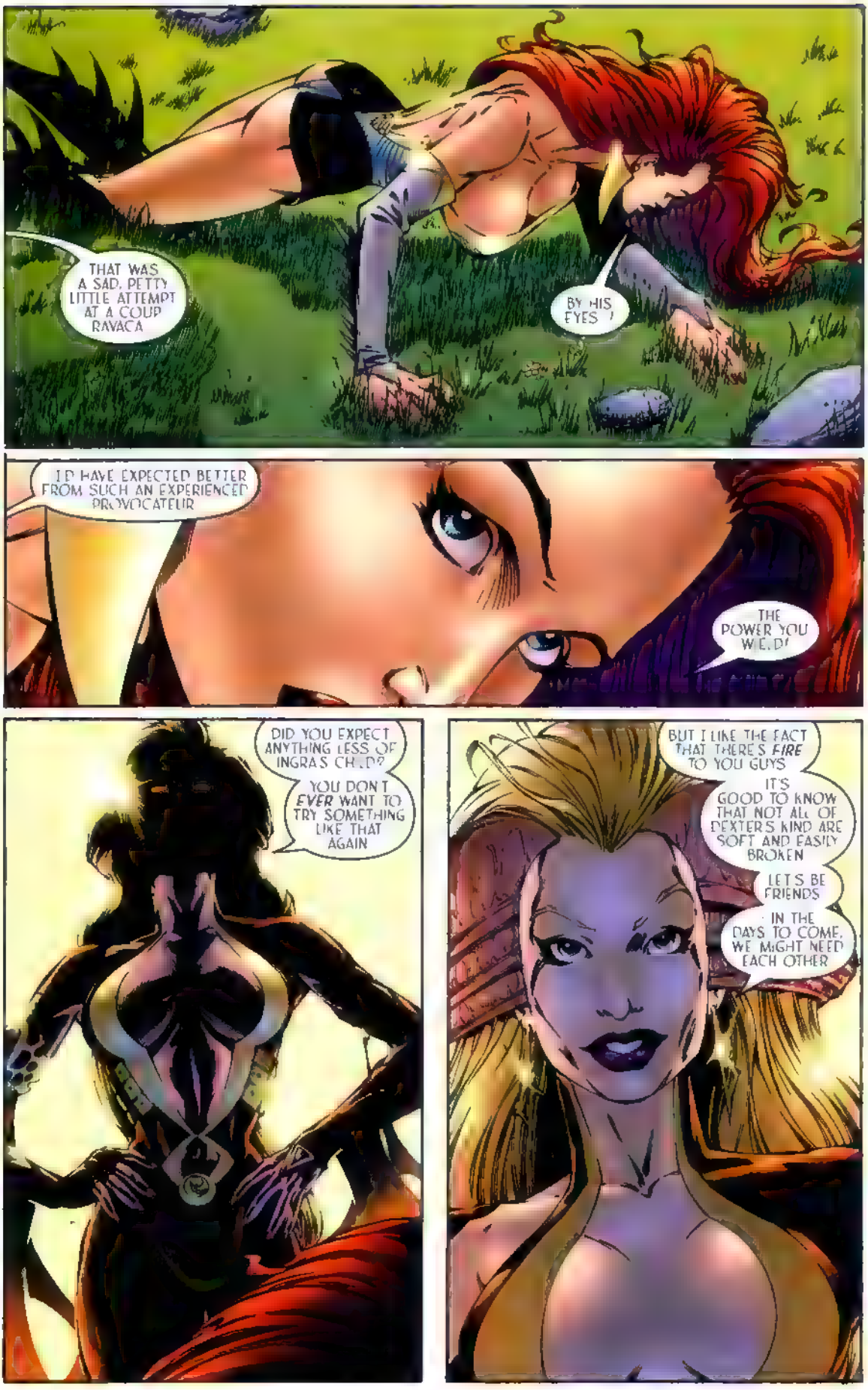
IHROE
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING IN HOUSE SINISTER?
VISITING NEW FRIENDS, I HOPE

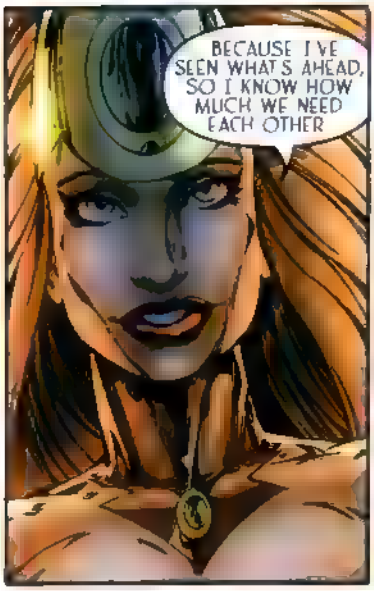
I HOPE SHE WON'T SPEND THE ENTIRE DAY CONTINUING THAT FRENETIC WHIRLING
IT'S UNDIGNIFIED
ALLOW HER AN EXPRESSION OF JOY INGRA
SHE WISHED FOR OUR REUNION AND IS PLEASED THAT IT HAS COME TO PASS
PYREM, MY LOVE -
- I DON'T NEED AN EMPATH TO TELL ME THE MOODS OF MY CHILD
DID YOU HAVE TO TELL HER ABOUT YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH THE SIGIL BEARER?
OR WE COULD BRING ONE HERE!
LET IT HAVE A GLIMPSE OF EOSIA ONCE THEY'VE TASTED HEAVEN, THEY'D NEVER WAGE WAR AGAINST US!
I CAN'T WAIT!
IT'S ALL GOING EXACTLY AS I ENVISIONED IT!
AND I'VE MADE MY FIRST ALLIES HERE - I SHOULD GO SHARE THIS WITH THEM!
SHE'S SEVERAL CENTURIES OLD
IS IT TOO MUCH TO EXPECT A CERTAIN MATURITY?
SHE'S SO YOUNG IN SPIRIT, INGRA
HMMM
I WONDER WHO THOSE ALLIES ARE?

VIHAM?
RAVACA?
MAY I JOIN YOU?
PERSHA!
WE WERE HOPING YOU'D RETURN
THREE WASN'T ENOUGH OF A CROWD

THREE?
OH
YOU!
NO NEED TO FEAR ME, CHILD
NO, DON'T BE AFRAID OF US
VIHAM, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
KEEPING YOU PERSHA
WE WON'T HARM YOU, BUT THE SECUNDAE NEED A BARGAINING CHIP
THE ELDERS ARE IDIOTS, THEY'VE SOLD US OUT TO YOUR MOTHER
BUT BY CONTROLLING HER CHILD WE GAIN CONTROL OVER HER
YOU CLEARLY DON'T KNOW MY MOTHER

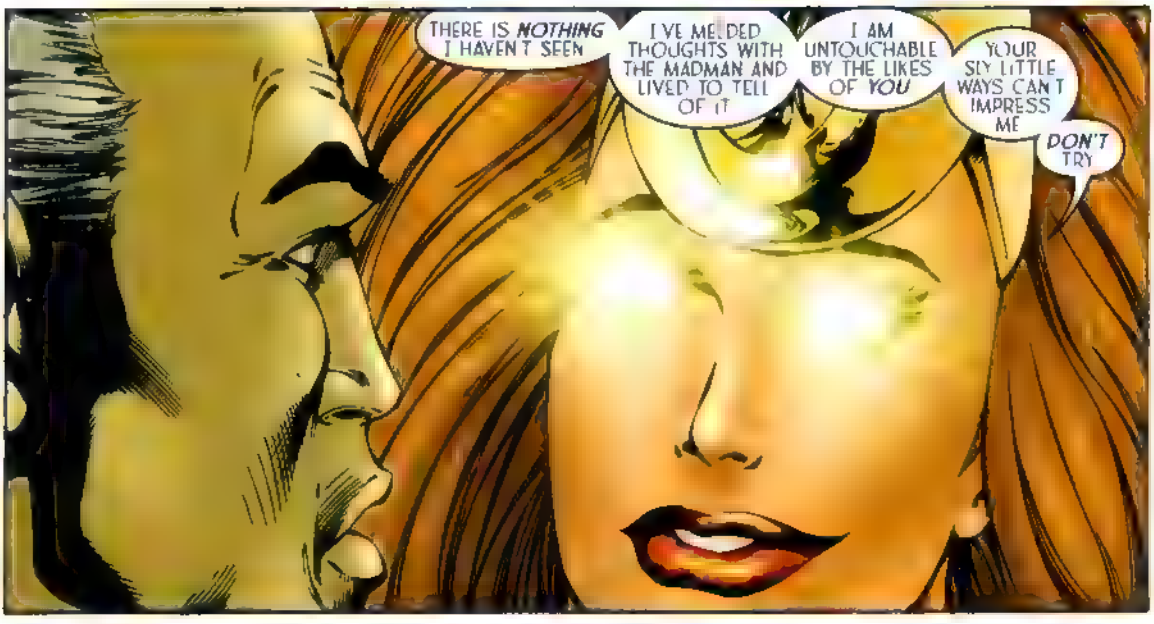
OR
ME

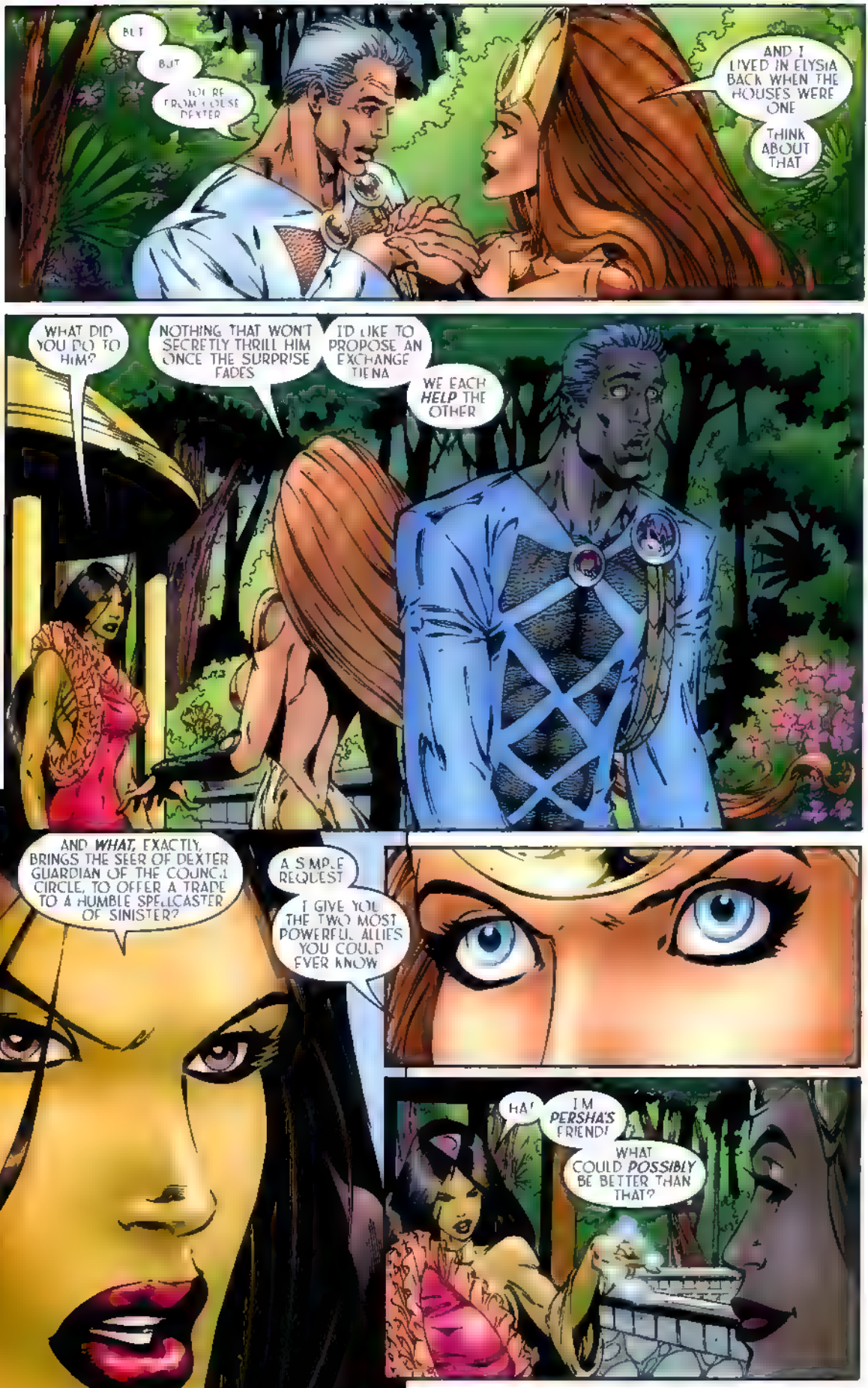

THAT WAS A SAD, PETTY LITTLE ATTEMPT AT A COUP RAVACA
BY HIS EYES !
I'D HAVE EXPECTED BETTER FROM SUCH AN EXPERIENCED PROVOCATEUR
THE POWER YOU WIELD!
DID YOU EXPECT ANYTHING LESS OF INGRA'S CHILD?
YOU DON'T EVER WANT TO TRY SOMETHING LIKE THAT AGAIN
BUT I LIKE THE FACT THAT THERE'S FIRE TO YOU GUYS
IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT NOT ALL OF DEXTER'S KIND ARE SOFT AND EASILY BROKEN
LET'S BE FRIENDS
IN THE DAYS TO COME, WE MIGHT NEED EACH OTHER


BECAUSE I'VE SEEN WHAT'S AHEAD, SO I KNOW HOW MUCH WE NEED EACH OTHER

IHROE, IHROE

OF COURSE WE NEED *EACH OTHER*
YOU, ME WEREN'T WE DESTINED TO FIT TOGETHER *INTIMATELY?*
YOU THINK I NEED *YOU* THAT WAY, EMPHER?
THESE EYES HAVE WITNESSED THE BATHERS OF EROS, BEEN COMMANDED TO SPY ON FIRST BORN IN RUT, OBSERVED EVERY LITTLE DANCE OF DOMINANCE ON ALL THE WORLDS BELOW


THERE IS *NOTHING* I HAVEN'T SEEN
I'VE MELDED THOUGHTS WITH THE MADMAN AND LIVED TO TELL OF IT
I AM UNTOUCHABLE BY THE LIKES OF *YOU*
YOUR SLY LITTLE WAYS CAN'T IMPRESS ME
DON'T TRY


BUT
BUT
YOU'RE FROM HOUSE DEXTER
AND I LIVED IN ELYSIA BACK WHEN THE HOUSES WERE ONE
THINK ABOUT THAT
WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?
NOTHING THAT WON'T SECRETLY THRILL HIM ONCE THE SURPRISE FADES
I'D LIKE TO PROPOSE AN EXCHANGE TIENA
WE EACH HELP THE OTHER
AND WHAT, EXACTLY, BRINGS THE SEER OF DEXTER GUARDIAN OF THE COUNCIL CIRCLE, TO OFFER A TRADE TO A HUMBLE SPELLCASTER OF SINISTER?
A SIMPLE REQUEST
I GIVE YOU THE TWO MOST POWERFUL ALLIES YOU COULD EVER KNOW
HA!
I'M PERSHA'S FRIEND!
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY BE BETTER THAN THAT?

ONE IS ME, THE SIGNS I SEE, AND THE SECRETS I CARRY

THE OTHER

YOUR PORTAL ! WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING HERE?

KNOW?

THE ONLY LOOSE BLOB OF ENERGY I KNOW IS *MAGIN*

IHROE!

BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW

GIBBP!

WHY HAVE YOU REVEALED OUR ALLIANCE?

BECAUSE I KNOW YOUR DESIRES ORUM AND THESE TWO WILL HELP US GAIN WHAT WE WISH

I'LL HELP YOU TOREL REGAIN HOUSE SINISTER

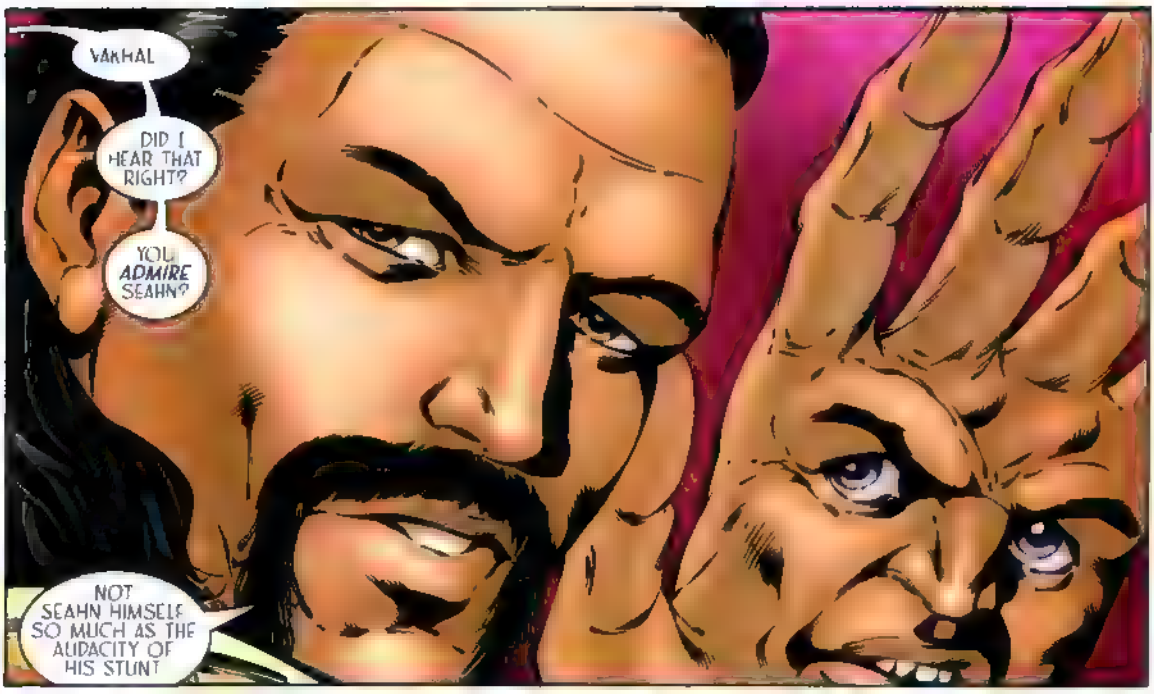
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS HELP ME GAIN MY ONE DESIRE

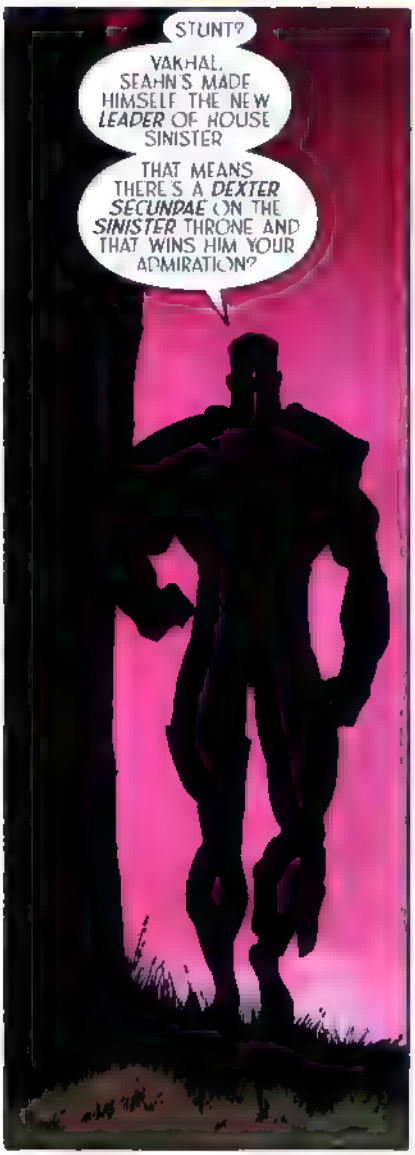
YOU KNOW ALREADY

SEAHN!
YES?
AND YOU ARE ?
JUST CURIOUS
CURIOUS TO KNOW WHAT
KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
WELL
JUST CURIOUS
CUTE NAME, THAT -
I'M EXERCISING THE RIGHT OF THE NEW LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER TO TAKE OVER THE BEST SPOT OF REAL ESTATE ON THIS SIDE OF ELYSIA
THE OLD OWNER WON'T BE NEEDING IT ANYMORE
YOU'D GAIN POINTS BY TELLING ME HOW GOOD IT LOOKS
OOOOH
IT LOOKS WONDERFUL
AND IT'S WYTURE
BUT YOU CAN CALL ME FRIEND

WELL, THEN, FRIEND
IF YOU'LL GIVE ME JUST A MINUTE TO FINISH MAKING A FEW ADJUSTMENTS
BECAUSE IF, AS THEY SAY, THE PROMINENCE OF OUR ARCHITECTURE IS AN INDICATION OF OUR POSITION IN THE HEIRARCHY
THEN NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO MISS THE MEANING OF THIS TOWER
SO, WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE THE FIRST TO HAVE A TOUR?
THAT'S OUR NEW LEADER?

THAT S HIM
HE DOESN T LOOK LIKE MUCH, TRUE, BUT THEY SAY HE WAS AN ACTIVIST FOR SECUNDAE RIGHTS OVER ON THE DEXTER SIDE, A REGULAR LEGEND-BUSTER
BEFORE HE DECIDED TO COME OUR WAY AND SURPRISE KICK THE COUNCIL S IMPERIOUS STUPONS
HE LOOKS TO ME TO BE MORE THAN A LITTLE UNGLUED UPSTAIRS BUT LOOKING HIM OVER NOW I VE GOT TO HAND IT TO HIM
HE CAME, HE SAW, HE GRABBED
I ADMIRE THAT KIND OF DETERMINATION


VAKHAL
DID I HEAR THAT RIGHT?
YOU *ADMIRE* SEAHN?
NOT SEAHN HIMSELF SO MUCH AS THE AUDACITY OF HIS STUNT


STUNT?
VAKHAL, SEAHN'S MADE HIMSELF THE NEW *LEADER* OF HOUSE SINISTER
THAT MEANS THERE'S A *DEXTER SECUNDAE* ON THE *SINISTER* THRONE AND THAT WINS HIM YOUR ADMIRATION?

WHY NOT? HE *HAS* FORMALLY ALLIED HIMSELF WITH HOUSE SINISTER
AND DID YOU *NOT* HEAR ME SAY THAT HE COUNTED COUP ON THE *ENTIRE* COUNCIL?
AND THEN THE LITTLE PSYCHO KILLS HIS OWN *FATHER*

ALTHOUGH YOU *KNEW* ABOUT *THAT* PART
YEAH
I REMEMBER

STORYTELLERS

Barbara KESEL
WRITER

Andy SMITH
PENCILER

Rob HUNTER
INKER

Sumi PAK
COLORIST

Dave LANPHEAR
LETTERER

Universe
created by
Mark Alessi &
Gina M. Villa

Mark Alessi Publisher & CEO • ***Gina M. Villa*** Chief Operating Officer
Michael A. Beattie Chief Financial Officer • ***Jennifer Hernandez*** General Counsel • ***Tony Panaccio*** Vice President Product Development
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Barbara Kesel Head Writer • ***Bart Sears*** Art Director • ***Michelle Pugliese*** Freelance Coordinator
Michael Atiyeh, Butch Guice, Dave Lanphear, Rick Magyar, Laura Martin, Mark Pennington & Andy Smith Assistant Art Directors
Pam Davies Vice President Production • ***Sylvia Bretz*** Production Supervisor Advertising/Web • ***Erin Flanagan*** Web Designer
Janet Bechtle Production Supervisor Books • ***Randy Martin*** Production Designer

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THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel
Andy Smith
Rob Hunter
Sumi Pak

They are the First

Immortal godlings, they believe themselves to be the creators of the universe. In their minds, nothing came before them, and nothing equals them. They inhabit Elysia, the bright center of the universe from which they can visit the worlds below to inspire love, longing, and war.

Centuries ago, strife caused the bisection of their city into two parts: House Dexter, home to the selfless; and House Sinister, home to the selfish. The two sides rarely mix; transit to the other House causes a loss of power proportionate to the power held by each of the First. Grand battles have been put aside; political skirmishes, vying for the most attractive mates, and toying with the inhabitants of the many worlds below now occupy the First's days.

Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae who has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently:

Tiena, Persha's friend, makes her first moves to gain influence with Seahn. Ihroe, observing this, travels to House Sinister to meet Tiena and introduce her to Ihroe's own co-conspirator, the mad seer Orium. Persha, having learned what her father Pyrem, Dexter's Leader, discovered about Sigil-Bearers – that they choose their own allegiances – delightedly chooses to share this with her new friends. They take the opportunity to try to enslave her, but discover that Persha controls vast untapped energies. Seahn continues to flaunt his control of House Sinister, while watched by Braag, the father he killed.

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YOU DIDN'T REALLY!
TELL ME AGAIN
IT WAS SIMPLE
BRAAG AND ORIUM WERE EXPENDING THEIR STORES TO STRIP INGRA'S POWER, BUT I HELD ENOUGH IN RESERVE TO CATCH BOTH OF THEM AT LOW EBB
IT'S FUNNY... SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE I'M DRAWING STRENGTH AND FORCE FROM SOMEWHERE THEY CAN'T ACCESS
AS THOUGH YOU COULD PULL POWER FROM THE GROUND BENEATH YOU?
EXACTLY!
WYTURE HOW DID YOU ?
NEVER MIND THAT
SEAHN, I'D LOVE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT YOUR PLANS FOR HOUSE SINISTER
WAIT--
WHA--?
BRAAG?
DID YOU SEE--

-HIM ?
SEE
BRAAG!
HE WAS JUST HERE!
SEE WHO?

BRAAG?

ARE YOU SURE, SEAHN?

I DON'T SEE HIM

IT WAS HIM

YOU'LL LEARN

I KNOW WHAT I SAW

THERE HE IS!

WHERE?

SEE?

YOU SEE ME ONLY AS A POTENTIAL PLAYTHING!

YOU NEED TO SEE WITH MORE THAN EYES, SEAHN

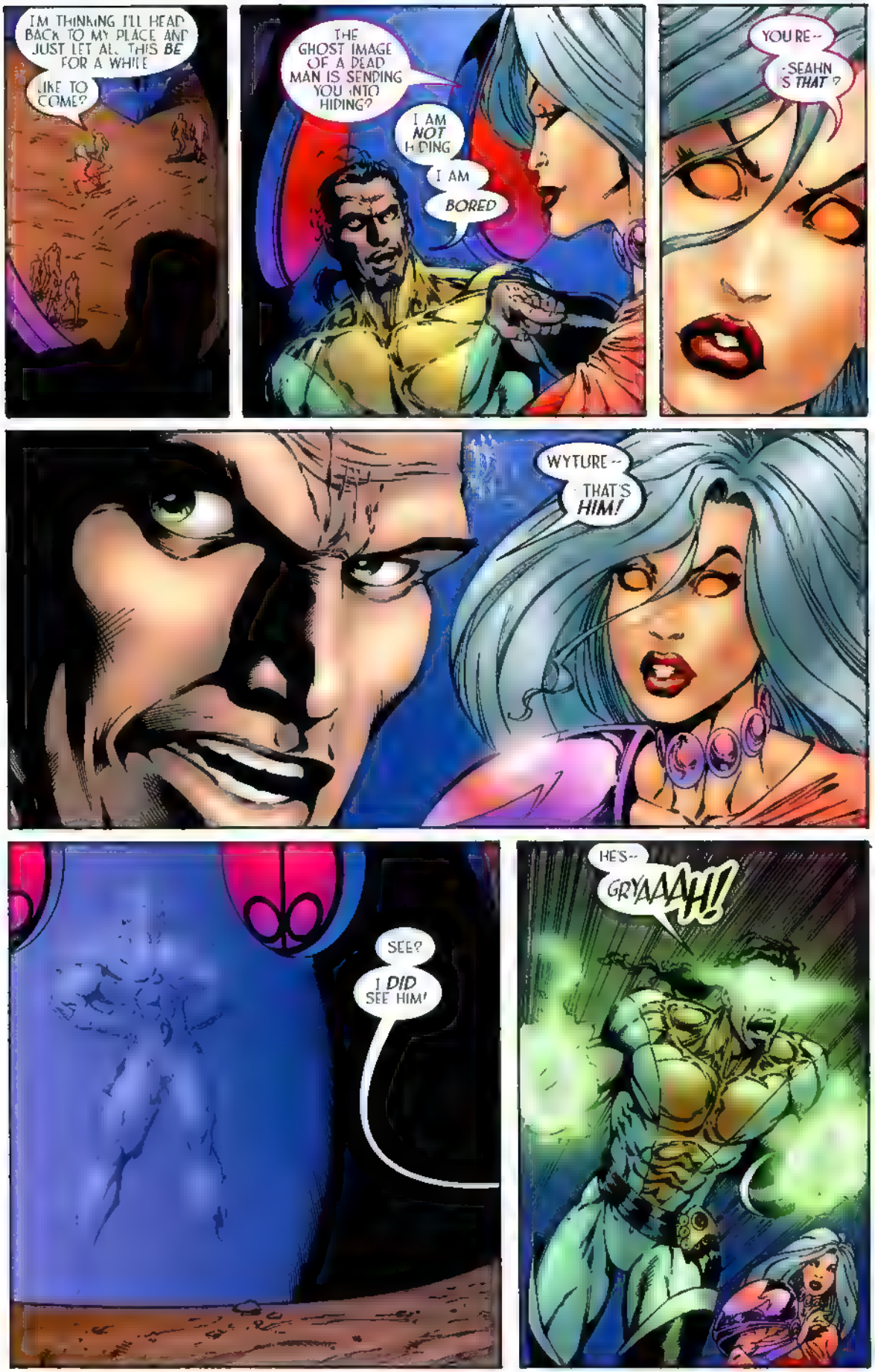
I STILL DON'T SEE HIM, SEAHN

BRAAG!
I KNOW
YOU'RE
NOT HERE
I SAW HIM
HE WAS HERE
YOU POOR THING
YOU'VE PUSHED YOURSELF SO HARD--OVERTHROWING INGRA, TAKING OVER HOUSE SINISTER, VANQUISHING THE COUNCIL, UPHOLDING YOUR RIGHT TO RULE
BUT DID YOU FORGET?
YOU KNOW YOU COULDN'T HAVE SEEN BRAAG
YOU KILLED HIM
I KNOW I KILLED HIM!

I KNOW I KILLED HIM!
YOU? YOU COULDN'T LIFT A HAND TO BRUISE A PEACH!
OH, LIKE YOU WOULD SHUT UP LONG ENOUGH TO WIELD A WEAPON AGAINST HIM!
YOU MOCKING MY BUDDY'S DISABILITY?
I DON'T NEED YOU TO BACK ME UP
WHY NOT? HE'S AN UP-FRONT GUY
OH, FINE JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE IT ALL TOGETHER
YOU ALWAYS THINK YOU'RE AHEAD OF US ALL!
YOU MAKE ME SICK!
CHOKE ON THOSE WORDS!
DON'T MAKE ME HURT YOU!
BRING IT ON!
CREEP!
WIMP!
LOSER!
YAKHA!!

WOULD YOU STOP TALKING TO YOURSELF?
UH
UH
UH--
SO - DO YOU FEEL YOUR TAUNTING OF SEAHN WAS A SUCCESS?

I'D SAY I GOT HIS ATTENTION
CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME JUST WHAT IT IS YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE HERE?
FROM WHAT I SEE, YOU'RE ONLY HEADED FOR PAIN
PAIN
THAT'S RIGHT
SEAHN HAS TO *PAY* IN PAIN FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE
WHAT?
SEAHN KILLING BRAAG ONCE WASN'T ENOUGH?
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE
YOU THAT EAGER FOR HIM TO DO IT *AGAIN?*
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND
JUST WAIT
YOU'LL SEE
ALL OF YOU
I TELL YOU HE'S HEADED FOR TROUBLE
HOLD YOUR BREATH YOU'RE NOT SAYING A THING WE DON'T ALREADY KNOW
HE'S JUST GOING TO GET SLAPPED SILLY
OR WORSE


I'M THINKING I'LL HEAD BACK TO MY PLACE AND JUST LET ALL THIS *BE* FOR A WHILE
LIKE TO COME?
THE GHOST IMAGE OF A DEAD MAN IS SENDING YOU INTO HIDING?
I AM *NOT* HIDING
I AM *BORED*
YOU'RE--
--SEAHN'S *THAT*?
WYTURE--
--THAT'S *HIM!*
SEE?
I *DID* SEE HIM!
HE'S--
GRYAAAAH!

NO!
BRAAGNNNNNGH!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO KILL YOU?!

WELL
GLAD THAT'S OVER WITH
AGAIN
BRAAG'S DEAD
I'M ALIVE
THE SEQUEL WAS *NOT* AS GOOD AS THE ORIGINAL
SO-- TIME TO MOVE ON
NO
--NOW IT'S *YOUR* TURN!
READY TO FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE

--TO DIE?!
IF YOU SURVIVE, SEAHN, THIS IS JUST THE PRELUDE TO THE MANY CHALLENGES I'LL SET AGAINST YOU

IF YOU SURVIVE
BRAAAAAG!
YOU ARE DEAD
YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
THIS ISN'T FUNNY!
I CAN SEE YOU NOW!
MAYBE I FORGOT TO LOOK THROUGH THE OBVIOUS
--SEE YOU WITHOUT EYES, BUT NOW I DO, AND WHAT I SEE ISN'T REAL!

YOU'RE NOT HIM!
WHAT ARE YOU?
WHAT AM I?
I AM THE ETERNAL DEATH OF BRAAG
A CONSTANT REMINDER OF THE PRICE OF YOUR CRIME
MY CRIME?

KILLING A DEAD MAN?
MY ONLY CRIME
WAS NOT FINISHING THE JOB.
THE FIRST TIME!

DIE DAMMIT
PLEASE DIE
SEAHN, SON OF BRAAG
YOU ARE A RANK DISAPPOINTMENT
YOU ARE NOT WORTHY TO CARRY ON THE LINE
TELL ME WHAT YOU REALLY ARE!
YOU CLAIM ALLEGIANCE TO SINISTER BUT YOU ARE DEXTER-BORN
FATHER-KILLER
SECOND BORN
SECUNDAE
STOP IT
UNWORTHY
YOUR OWN MOTHER TRIED TO KILL YOU
SHE KNEW
SHE KNEW YOU WERE WORTHLESS
BETRAYER
MURDERER
TELL ME!

I AM THE TRUE SON OF BRAAG
BUILT BY HIS HANDS
IMBUED WITH HIS NATURE
I AM THE LEGACY OF THE ENGINEER
HIS CONSTRUCT
HIS LOVING CREATION
YOU ARE AN ACCIDENT OF LUST
YOU DISHONORED OUR FATHER BY KILLING HIM
SO I MUST AVENGE HIS NOBILITY BY TAKING YOUR LIFE
KEEP TALKING
NO, REALLY... I'M LISTENING

EVEN THOUGH THE FATHER YOU WANT ME TO REVERE WAS NEVER THAT TO ME!
BRAAG WAS-
SILENCE!
YOU AREN'T FIT TO SPEAK HIS NAME, LET ALONE BEAR IT!
GET REAL-
BRAAG WAS SLIME
BUT I AM MORE A PART OF HIM THAN YOU COULD EVER BE!
YOU KILL ME, YOU'RE KILLING THE LAST OF HIM
BUT HE IS THE CREATOR AND YOU ARE THE DESTROYER
GOT THAT RIGHT

BRAAG BUILT YOU AND I'LL TAKE YOU APART!
GYAAAAH!
YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD KILL ME?
DIDN'T HE BUILD YOU ANY BRAINS?
LET'S THINK ABOUT THIS. I'VE GOT THE POWER OF TEN COUNCIL MEMBERS.
AND YOU ARE A TOY MADE BY ONE PLAIN OL' FIRST
YOU SHOULD BE REALIZING RIGHT ABOUT NOW THAT THERE'S NO HOPE
THAT'S A GOOD PLACE TO END THIS
BWHOOM

OOOF!
NOW THAT'S PARTING WORDS!
OW!
PARTING! I GET IT!
YOU'RE GONNA
HEY..
LOOK WHO DROPPED IN
HELP ME
BUDDY, I'D SAY THAT YOU BROUGHT THIS ON YOURSELF
SHOULD HAVE QUIT WHILE YOU WERE
Uh.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE
WAAAGH!
HEADS UP.. COMPANY!
HEY, SEAHN! YOU WOULDN'T FAULT A GUY FOR GIVING A FRIEND A HAND, WOULD YOU?

LEAVE THIS TO ME
SIGH
IF YOUR CREATOR COULD SEE YOU NOW
HERE'S THE DEAL--PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER
BECAUSE I'M GOING TO NEED THAT FIGHTING SPIRIT ON MY SIDE
GET THIS INTO YOUR HEAD. I'VE GOT A HOUSE TO RUN HERE
IF YOU TWO HOTHEADS RUN INTERFERENCE, I'LL HAVE AN EASIER TIME OF IT
BESIDES, DON'T YOU THINK DEAR OLD DAD WOULD HAVE WANTED BOTH HIS SONS TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY NAME?
SPEAKING OF
DO YOU HAVE ONE OR SHOULD I JUST CALL YOU HEAD?
BOYS.

STORYTELLERS

Barbara KESEL
WRITER

Andy SMITH
PENCILER

Rob HUNTER
INKER

Sumi PAK
COLORIST

Dave LANPHEAR
LETTERER

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THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel
Andy Smith
Rob Hunter
Sumi Pak

They are the First

Immortal godlings, they believe themselves to be the creators of the universe. In their minds, nothing came before them, and nothing equals them. They inhabit Elysia, the bright center of the universe from which they can visit the worlds below to inspire love, longing, and war.

Centuries ago, strife caused the bisection of their city into two parts: House Dexter, home to the selfless; and House Sinister, home to the selfish. The two sides rarely mix; transit to the other House causes a loss of power proportionate to the power held by each of the First. Grand battles have been put aside; political skirmishes, vying for the most attractive mates, and toying with the inhabitants of the many worlds below now occupy the First's days.

Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae who has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently

Accompanied by Wyture, his new mentor, Seahn is haunted by visions of the father he killed. These ghost images coalesce into a version he can fight. The battle between Seahn and "Braag" rips open the streets of House Sinister until "Braag" is revealed to be a biomechanical construct created by Braag before his death. This second son of Braag wants to avenge his creator's death, but is instead at the verge of death himself when Seahn decides he'll show mercy to his artificial brother. (This comes as a great relief to Vakhal, who has been watching with all three sets of eyes.) But before Seahn, Wyture mentored Persha...

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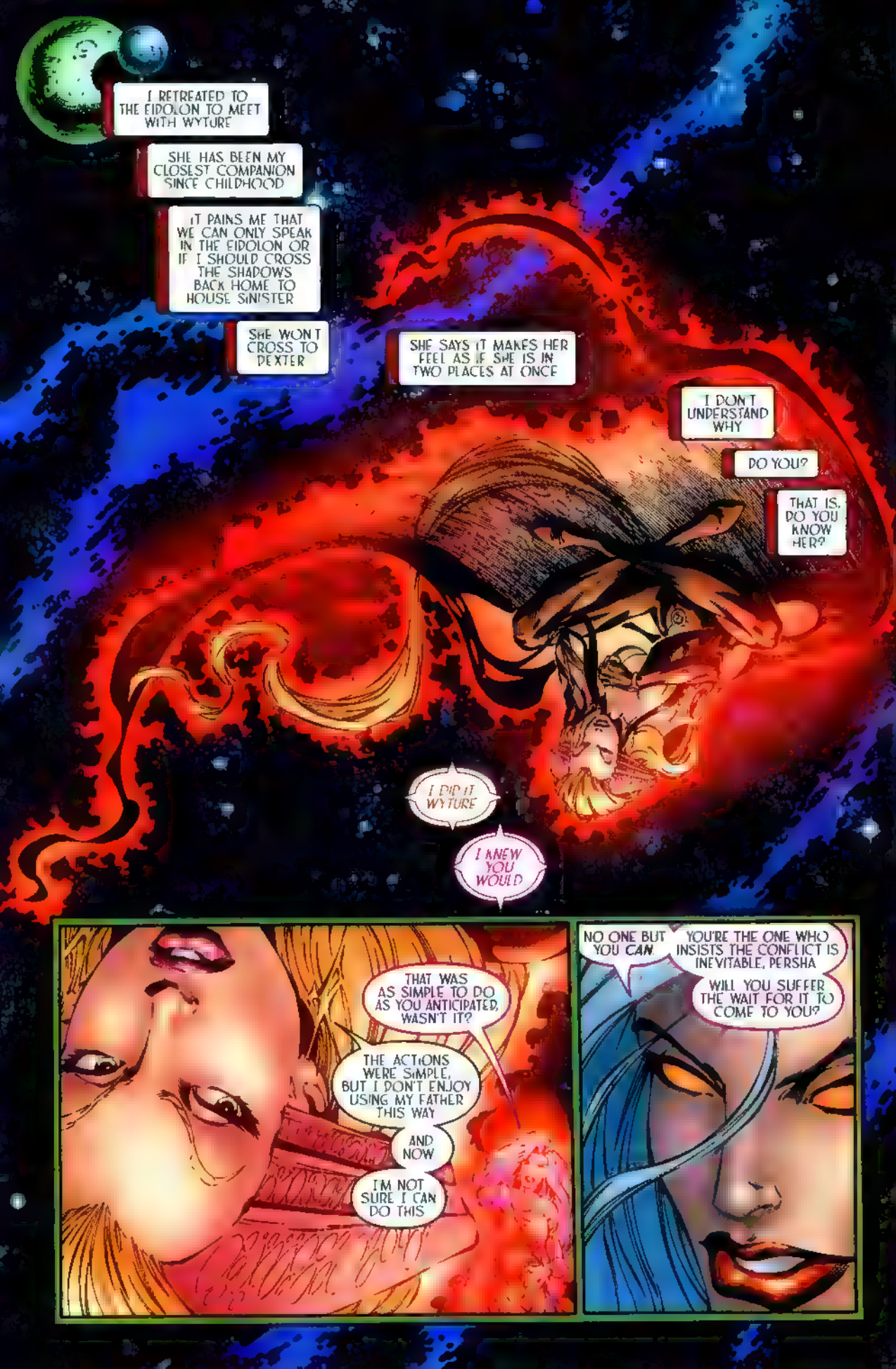
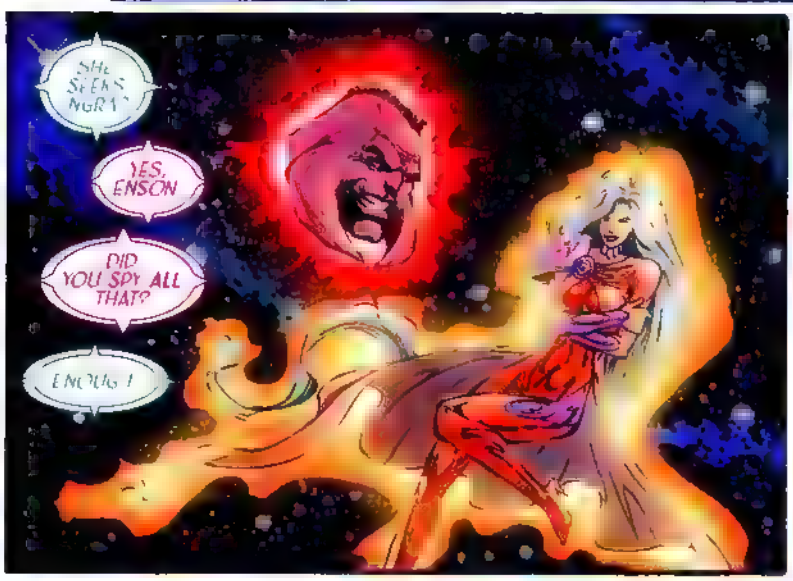
TAKING THE GAUNTLET FROM PYREM WASN'T ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT
ALTHOUGH HE IS AN EMPATH, HE'S PRONE TO KNOWING OTHERS INTENTIONS, NOT THEIR ACTUAL PLANS
HE HIMSELF IS GOOD THIS MAKES HIM ERR ON THE SIDE OF ANTICIPATING GOOD FROM OTHERS
ESPECIALLY ME, NOW THAT I'VE COME TO *HIS* HOUSE
PYREM RECOGNIZES HIS OWN BLOOD IN ME WHICH BLINDS HIM TO MY MOTHER'S INFLUENCE
AND ALTHOUGH HE KNOWS I CAN TRAVEL THROUGH SHADOW
HE DIDN'T EXPECT ME TO USE THAT ABILITY AGAINST HIM
ONCE I GAINED THE GAUNTLET

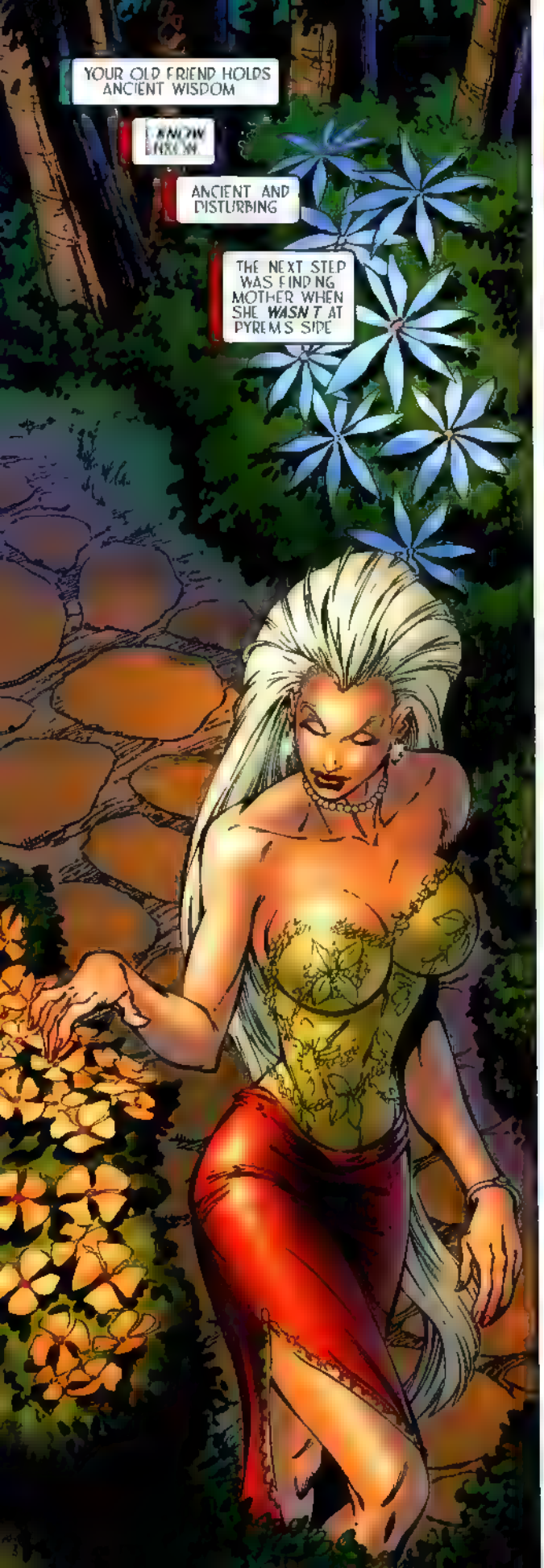

I RETREATED TO THE EIDOLON TO MEET WITH WYTURE
SHE HAS BEEN MY CLOSEST COMPANION SINCE CHILDHOOD
IT PAINS ME THAT WE CAN ONLY SPEAK IN THE EIDOLON OR IF I SHOULD CROSS THE SHADOWS BACK HOME TO HOUSE SINISTER
SHE WON'T CROSS TO DEXTER
SHE SAYS IT MAKES HER FEEL AS IF SHE IS IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY
DO YOU?
THAT IS, DO YOU KNOW HER?
I DID IT, WYTURE
I KNEW YOU WOULD
THAT WAS AS SIMPLE TO DO AS YOU ANTICIPATED, WASN'T IT?
THE ACTIONS WERE SIMPLE, BUT I DON'T ENJOY USING MY FATHER THIS WAY
AND NOW
I'M NOT SURE I CAN DO THIS
NO ONE BUT YOU CAN
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO INSISTS THE CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE, PERSHA
WILL YOU SUFFER THE WAIT FOR IT TO COME TO YOU?

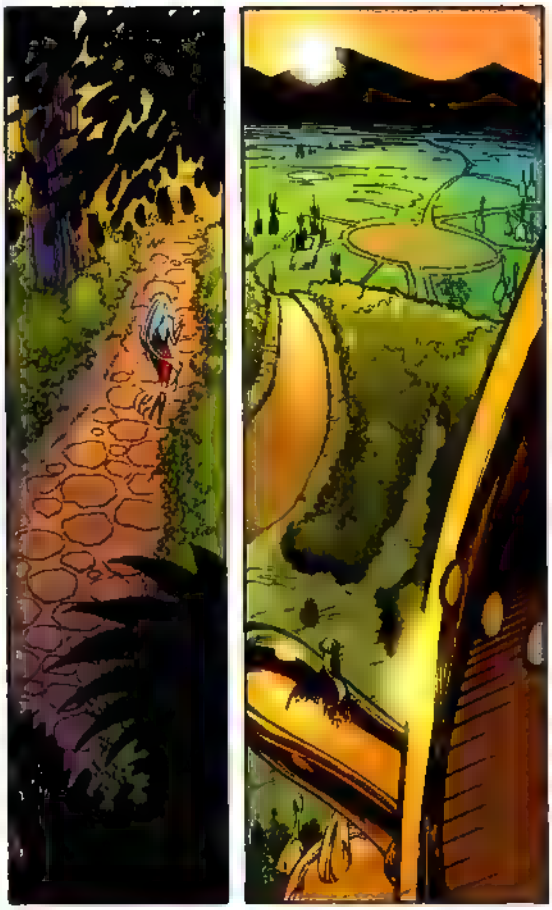
NO
THAT WILL ONLY MAKE IT WORSE
IT'S BEGUN, AND I MUST CONTINUE

I HAVE TAKEN UP THE GAUNTLET
IN BOTH SENSES OF THE DEED


SHE SEEKS NGRA'
YES, ENSON
DID YOU SPY ALL THAT?
ENOUGH!

THEN GO TO HER AND SPUR HER ON
I'LL DO THE SAME FOR SEAHN
YES, I KNOW HER


YOUR OLD FRIEND HOLDS ANCIENT WISDOM
I KNOW ENOUGH
ANCIENT AND DISTURBING
THE NEXT STEP WAS FINDING MOTHER WHEN SHE *WASN'T* AT PYREM'S SIDE



MOTHER WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO BIND YOU?
YOU'LL ONLY GIVE ME ONE CHANCE
ALTWAA, FORGIVE ME IF I FAIL.

HELLO? WHO'S THERE?
ME.

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN BIND INGRA USING ONLY ALTWAAL'S GAUNTLET?
ENSON!
I THOUGHT NO ONE WAS HERE
I WAS JUST
THERE IS NO NEED TO MAKE EXCUSES TO ME, PERSHA
YOU WERE JUST PLANNING AN ASSAULT ON YOUR OWN MOTHER
YOU INTEND TO USE THE GAUNTLET TO PREVENT INGRA FROM MANIPULATING ANY OF THE UNIVERSAL ENERGIES SHE MAY FIND A WAY TO REGAIN
AND YOU KNOW THIS HOW?
IT IS MY PURPOSE AND PLACE TO KNOW THE FLOW OF THINGS
TO AID IT WHEN THE MOMENT IS RIGHT
TELL ME ABOUT IT
TELL ME EVERYTHING
MY FIRST STEP WAS DETERMINING WHAT DEVICE COULD QUELL INGRA
LOOKING BACK, I SAW WHAT WEAPON ALTWAAL USED TO BANISH BREATOS
THE SAME GAUNTLET PYREM NOW POSSESSES
TAKING THE GAUNTLET FRO PYREM WASN ESPECIALLY
AND THAT'S HOW I CAME TO BE MINE

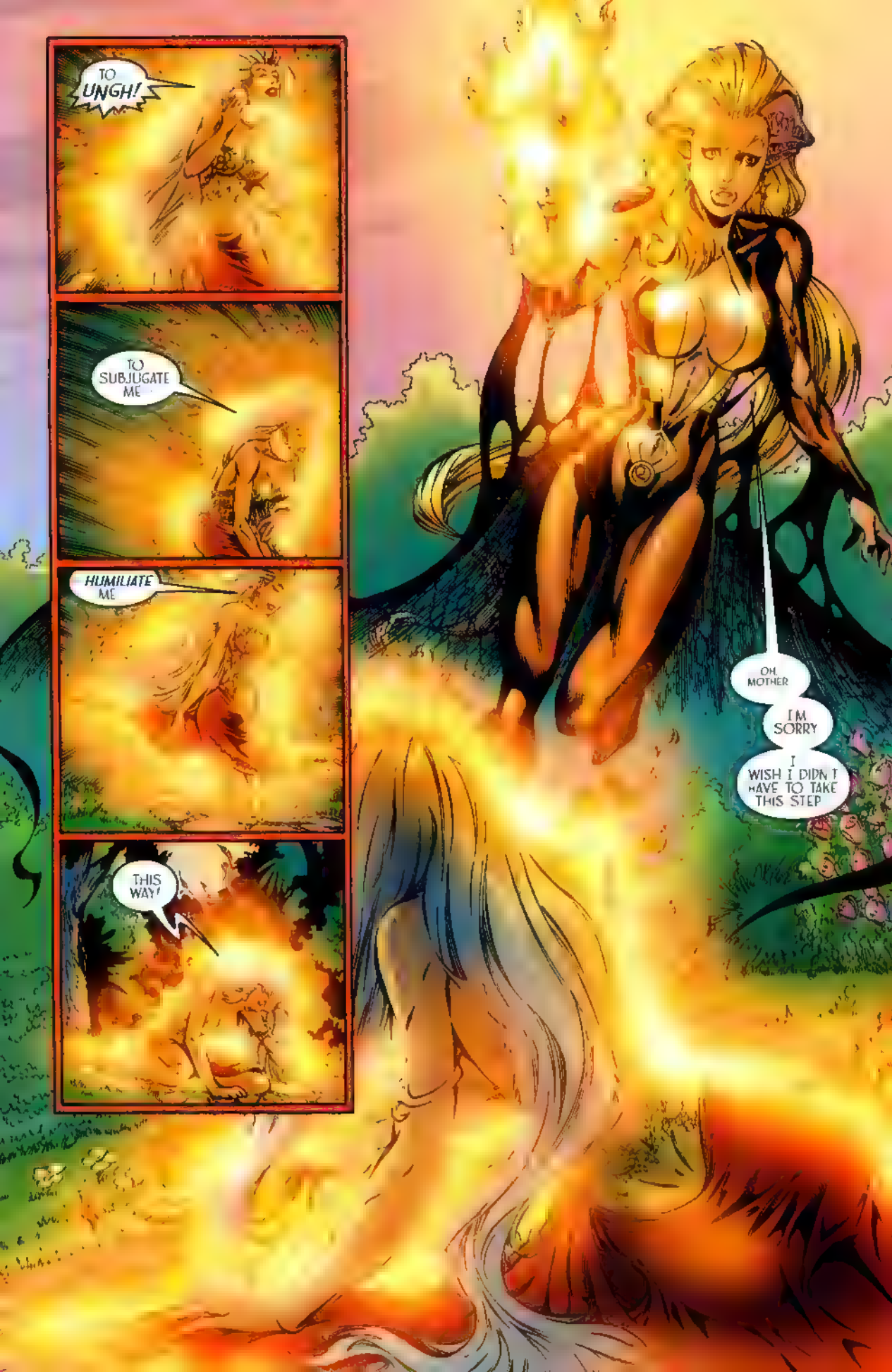
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME
OR IS THE RIGHT WORD REALLY PERMIT?
I'LL BE ON ABOUT MY BUSINESS
I'LL RETURN AFTER, ENSON
I'LL BE WATCHING
TO ENJOY HOW WRONG YOU ARE ABOUT HOW EASY YOUR LITTLE AMBUSH WILL BE
SO EASY ON THE EARTH SIDE TO ABANDON ALL AMBITION AND MERELY THRIVE

SO SIMPLE

AND SO UNLIKELY
MOTHER--!

AAAAH!
FORGIVE ME

WHAT HAVE I *DONE* TO DESERVE SUCH **TORMENT** FROM MY OWN *DAUGHTER?*
YOU'VE DONE NOTHING
YET
BUT I ***KNOW*** YOU, MOTHER, SO I KNOW YOU'RE PLOTTING ***SOMETHING***, AND I JUST CAN'T STAND IDLY BY AND SEE IT HAPPEN
YOU WOULD ***PUNISH*** ME FOR UNCOMMITTED CRIMES?
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT

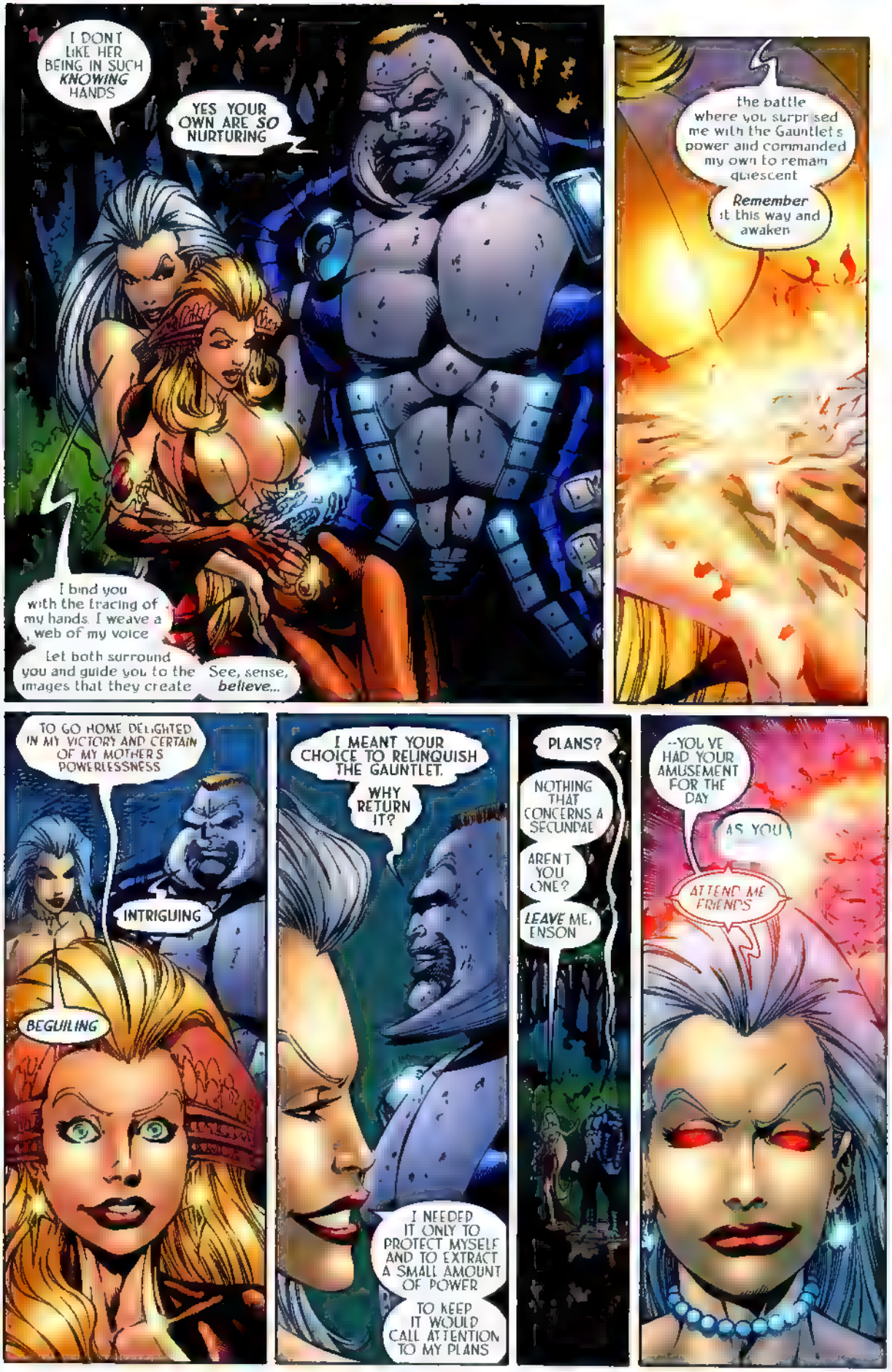

TO
UNGH!
TO SUBJUGATE ME
HUMILIATE ME
THIS WAY!
OH MOTHER
I'M SORRY
I WISH I DIDN'T HAVE TO TAKE THIS STEP

BUT YOU-
YOU'LL NEVER TRULY CHANGE, WILL YOU?
NOW IS THE MOMENT WHEN WE MUST COMBINE TO SURVIVE--
AND I HAVE NO FAITH THAT YOU'LL ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN!
I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU
I JUST HAVE TO KEEP YOU FROM HURTING EVERYTHING ELSE!
PERSHA
PLEASE DON'T DO THIS LIKE A STRANGER
IF YOU MUST INHIBIT MY MAJESTY
FACE ME AS YOU DO
COME CLOSER

HOLD ME
YOU DO UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?
I KNOW YOU CAN'T SEE THINGS THE WAY I DO, BUT IF YOU'D JUST LET ME SHOW YOU, I CAN HELP YOU UNDERSTAND WHY YOU CAN'T INTERFERE
PERSHA OF COURSE I UNDERSTAND
YOU'VE BEEN TOUCHED BY A VISION YOU BELIEVE TO BE THE TRUTH, AND YOU FEEL SO RESPONSIBLE
YOU'RE JUST ACTING ON IMPULSE
A FOOLISH WAY TO ACT MY SWEET, WEAK DAUGHTER

YOU MAY HAVE MATURED INTO POWER THAT RIVALS MINE
BUT I HAVE CENTURIES MORE EXPERIENCE IN DECEPTION
MOTHER!
SO I SEE
THE GAUNTLET ARE YOU GOING TO USE IT ON ME?
EXECUTE THE TRAITOR WHO CHALLENGED SINISTER'S LEADER?
OH, PERSHA!
I'D NEVER DO THAT TO YOU!
DON'T YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU?

I DON T NEED TO DO MORE THAN KILL AN IDEA AND REPLACE IT W TH ANOTHER
JUST LET YOURSELF DRIFT INTO THE EMBRACE OF MY ILLUSION AND EVERYTHING WILL BE LOVING AND WONDERFUL
CONSIDERING HER PRESENT CONDITION-
--LOVING AND WONDERFUL IS A CURIOUS DESCRIPTION.
ENSON?
GO ON, INGRA.
I'M CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT YOU SAY NEXT.
WHY?
BECAUSE I FIND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE SHAPE OF YOUR WORDS WILL BE
YOUR POSITION, THIS ENTHRALLMENT S INTENT--
MYSTERIES.
I'M A TENACIOUS DETECTIVE WHEN FACED WITH ONE
ARE YOU ACCUSTOMED TO KNOWING?
ARE YOU ACCUSTOMED TO LEADING?
SHAL WE TRADE YESSES?
GIVE ME MY DAUGHTER ENSON


I DONT LIKE HER BEING IN SUCH KNOWING HANDS
YES YOUR OWN ARE SO NURTURING
I bind you with the tracing of my hands I weave a web of my voice
Let both surround you and guide you to the images that they create
See, sense, believe...
the battle where you surprised me with the Gauntlet's power and commanded my own to remain quiescent
Remember it this way and awaken
TO GO HOME DELIGHTED IN MY VICTORY AND CERTAIN OF MY MOTHER'S POWERLESSNESS
INTRIGUING
BEGUILING
I MEANT YOUR CHOICE TO RELINQUISH THE GAUNTLET.
WHY RETURN IT?
I NEEDED IT ONLY TO PROTECT MYSELF AND TO EXTRACT A SMALL AMOUNT OF POWER
TO KEEP IT WOULD CALL ATTENTION TO MY PLANS
PLANS?
NOTHING THAT CONCERNS A SECUNDAE
AREN'T YOU ONE?
LEAVE ME, ENSON
--YOU'VE HAD YOUR AMUSEMENT FOR THE DAY
AS YOU
ATTEND ME FRIENDS

AS THIS CALL TOUCHES YOUR MINDS

REMEMBER MY VISITS TO YOU

REMEMBER THE BARGAIN WE MADE

YOUR CONNECTION TO ME

THE PROMISE YOU MADE

AND NOW MUST FULFILL

HMMM

THE DAY WILL COME WHEN I REQUIRE YOUR HELP

FOR THE SAKE OF THE ETERNAL EMPIRE AND ALL ITS WORLDS!

WHEN THE FORCES AGAINST ME ARE MANY AND MY POWER TOO WEAK

WHEN THAT DAY COMES, WHEN YOU HONOR OUR BARGAIN

WHEN THE SIGIL BEARERS WILL HAVE TO SIDE WITH ME AGAINST THE ROGUE ELEMENTS IN HEAVEN

ONLY *YOU* CAN SAVE ME...

BY RETURNING

-SOME MEASURE-

-OF THE POWER-

I GAVE YOU--

IN A DIFFERENT GUISE

WHEN I GAVE YOU THE SIGIL?

LIAR.

THANK YOU, MY LOVES
I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER NOW

STORYTELLERS

Barbara Kesel — WRITER

Andy Smith — PENCILER

Rob Hunter — INKER

Sumi Pak — COLORIST

Dave Lanphear — LETTERER

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Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae who has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently

Wyture steals Altwaal's Gauntlet, a weapon that magnifies power, from her father, Pyrem, to use to limit her mother, Ingra. Ingra turns the attack on Persha, leaving Persha with the illusion that she has succeeded while Ingra remains unfettered. This prompts Ingra to reach out to the Sigil-Bearers of several worlds, ones she had previously contacted by cozying up to them and playing the part of their sigil-gifting benefactor. They flood her with power, which she contains in secret.

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I SAID NO

EMPHER'S REALLY *VERY* HARMLESS

ANNOYING AND PERHAPS A LITTLE *TOO* PERSISTENT, BUT HARMLESS

YOU'LL LEARN TO IGNORE HIM, IHROE

WE HAVE

I DON'T FIND HIS PESTERING AS FUNNY AS YOU SEEM TO, TIENA

BUT HE *IS* FUNNY

JUST LET YOURSELF *ENJOY* HIS SILLY WAYS

YOU MIGHT EVEN ENJOY *HIM* HE'S SO EAGER TO PLEASE

BUT YOU DON'T SEEM TO ALLOW YOURSELF ANY ENJOYMENT OUTSIDE YOUR PRIDE AT BEING DEXTER'S ALL-SEEING GUARDIAN

I WON'T WASTE MYSELF ON LESSER BEINGS

THE *FIRST* HAVE THEIR STANDARDS

IHROE!

DON'T YOU EVER DO THAT TO ME AGAIN!

THEN DON'T PRESUME TO TOUCH ME

CONTROL YOURSELF, EMPHER

WOULD YOU RISK NOT LEARNING WHAT I KNOW FOR A MERE COUPLING?

YOU WANT ME TO SAY NO DON'T YOU?

ALL RIGHT NO

BUT I MEAN YES

FRIENDS AGAIN?

GOOD

THEN LET'S BRING OUR NEW ALLIANCE TO FRUITION!

IT'S TIME...

"-TO PLANT OUR ROOTS IN THE MADMAN'S SWAMP!"
ORIUM!
WE'RE HERE!
HE KNOWS, EMPHER
ORIUM IS NOT AS DISTURBED AS HE ALLOWS US TO BELIEVE
I'VE SEEN THE WORKINGS OF HIS MIND -THERE IS A DEADLY INTELLIGENCE HIDDEN IN THE LIQUID OF HIS LUNACY
HE IS THE MOST POWERFUL ALLY WE COULD HAVE, BUT THE DEADLIEST IF WE UNDERESTIMATE THE STRENGTH THAT LURKS BENEATH HIS SURFACE

UNDER AND ABOVE!
WHAT TREMBLING MISCONCEPTION BRINGS YOU TO MY HOME?
YOU SEE INTELLIGENCE IN THAT?
I DON'T EVEN SEE FISH
ORIUM LED HOUSE SINISTER LONG AGO! HE'S
HE'S WASHED HIS THOUGHTS OF YOU!

TIENA OF THE PLANT MAGICS UPROOTED!

EMPHER THE SPEWING SOURCE OF COMFORT

-KNOWS NONE!

AND THROE THE GUARDIAN

STANDS FAST AGAINST YOUR ASSAULT, ORIUM!

STOOD FAST

FELL FASTER

THE LIFE BLOODED ONE DECEIVES HERSELF THAT THERE ARE SECRETS TO BE HID BENEATH MY WAVES

THE PERFECT GAZE OF THROE'S WATERY EYES BRINES OVER CLOUDING SIGHT

BUT WHAT'S THIS ?

A HERO RISES TO BATTLE THE TIDES!

HIS STRENGTH FUELED IN RELATION TO THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS?

TWISTED THAT ALL RESPECT WILL BE WASHED AWAY AS FLESH DRIES

ENOUGH
MY TWITCHING CURIOSITY IS EASED
ELEPHANTINE WILL AND CLUTCHING NEED FLOWS THROUGH EACH OF YOU
SO WASH YOUR TREASONOUS THOUGHTS PAST MY GURGLING EARS, HROE
BUT IF YOU HAVE DIVERTED MY FLOW TO USELESS EDDIES, BEWARE THE SLASHING OF MY UNINTERRUPTED ANGER!
YOU AND I HAVE SHARED MUCH WITHOUT TOUCHING ORIUM
I'VE KEPT NOTHING FROM YOU BUT A SMALL THOUGHT
A TRIFLE OF POSSIBILITY, NURTURED BY THE DEPTH OF YOUR WISDOM
BROUGHT INTO FULL FLOWER ONLY THROUGH THE ALLIANCE OF LIKE MINDS. HERE'S HOW WE ALL GAIN WHAT WE DESIRE

"--DOMINANCE OVER ALL OTHERS"
SHINNSA?
TAKE NO NOTICE OF HER - SHE'S FALLEN UNDER SOME SPELL
T'ENA'S MAGIC I RECOGNIZE THE SCENT
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO INGRA'S PET?
DIDN'T YOU HEAR? WITHOUT OUR OLD LEADER TO THINK FOR HER, SHINNSA'S GOT NO WILL OF HER OWN
HER WILL'S BEEN SUBVERTED BY ANOTHER, I'D SAY
OH, SHINNSA -
LISTEN TO THEM TALK ABOUT YOU THAT'S CRUEL~

--EVEN FOR *US*
WHY DO YOU LET TIENA
LET TIENA TREAT
CAN'T STOP HER
BUT I CAN
SHINNSA, I CAN'T BELIEVE *TIENA* DID THIS TO YOU!
WHA- *TIENA* DID ?

I'M GOING TO KILL THAT LITTLE WITCH!
PROBABLY NOT, BUT IT'S INTERESTING TO SPECULATE WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN WHEN THE WIND OF YOUR BLADES AND THE WAVES OF COLLUSION COME TOGETHER!
WYTURE!
SEAHN!
THERE YOU ARE!
I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO SHOW *MYSELF* AROUND MY NEWLY-ACQUIRED CITY!
NOT AT ALL!
I WAS JUST CAUSING A LITTLE TROUBLE~
DON'T LET IT BOTHER YOU!

SPARE ME YOUR CLUMSY MISDIRECTION BETRAYER OF BONDS!

ORIUM, ARE YOU ACCUSING ME?

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I WOULD

CAN'T YOU TASTE THE PESTILENTIAL BLOSSOMING OF BETRAYAL?

WHA--?

YES, I SEE THE PROBLEM

WHICH MUST BE MET WITH AMBITION'S DROWNING!

NO

NO!

SHINNSA?
SISTER!
DID YOU THINK ORIUM'S WATERS WOULD WASH AWAY YOUR BETRAYAL OF ME?
STOP!
BETRAYAL CURDLED MY OFFENDED BLOOD~
~MAKING IT MY PLACE TO METE OUT PUNISHMENT!

I NEVER COULD ABIDE INGRA'S RABID LAPDOG
YOU--!
YOU DREW HER INTO MY HOME!
IHROE--YOU BROUGHT THE TROUBLESOME THOUGHT OF INGRA INTO MY SAFE HARBOR!
YOU AND YOUR RECKLESS CO-CONSPIRATORS-- ALTWAAL CANNOT BE SO EASILY OVERTHROWN-- GANNISH LEADS US, GANNISH AND HIS ALLIES MUST BE THWARTED!
YOU LINK US TO GANNISH? TO ALTWAAL?
WE'RE NOT IHROE'S CO-CONSPIRATORS! WE DON'T EVEN LIKE HER!
QUIET!

SAD LITTLE IHROE, NO BINDING OF SOULS--YOUR ALLIES HOLD NO CARE FOR YOU
ALL GONE NOW THE POOL CAN CALM
OR UM
DID YOU KILL THEM?
NOTHING DIED BY YOUR JOYLESS TINKERING WITH THE LIQUID MOTION OF FATE!
YOU FAILED, IHROE!
RASH ACTIONS, RASHER OF SOULS DEAD OF IT.
YOU ACTED RASHLY ORIUM!
TOGETHER WE COULD HAVE TAKEN BACK BOTH HOUSES!
NOW YOU'VE UNDONE AN ALLIANCE I SAW WOULD LEAD TO SUCCESS!
YOU ARE MAD!
I LAID MY HOPES ON A WORN-OUT, WASHED-UP OLD--
IHROE

I DON'T LIKE YOU ANYMORE
I DO FIND YOU USEFUL STILL
YOUR THOUGHTS KEEP MY OWN LOCKED TO SANITY WHEN ANGER INTERRUPTS THEIR PASSAGE
SEVERING THAT TIE WILL BE A NUISANCE
BUT MADNESS HAS SERVED ME WELL

AND YOU HAVE NOT
GOODBYE, THROE
I WON'T THINK WELL OF YOU ANYMORE
OR WELL WITHOUT YOU
WELLS RUNNING DEEP LIKE TROUGHS IN ANXIOUS COUNTRYSIDE
TWISTED BEYOND TRAILS TO MEANING

TRAILS
TO
CALM
WATERS
CALM
CROWDED, CLEAR THOUGHTS
LUCID WHEN CALM, I'M CERTAIN MY COMPOSURE WILL WASH AWAY IN TIME
BUT YOU NEED A LITTLE MADNESS. SHE WHO THINKS SHE SEES WITH CLARITY
GIVING YOU WHAT YOU WANT WILL SERVE US BOTH

WHEW!
THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE, BUT WE'RE SAFE NOW
SAFE?
THAT SELF-CENTERED DEXTER CREATURE EXPOSED OUR HOPES TO SOMEONE WHO WILL LIKELY NOW USE THAT KNOWLEDGE AGAINST US!
YOUR BETRAYAL STEMS FROM YOUR OWN PLOTTING, TIENA!
TIENA'S RIGHT, THOUGH
THAT IHROE IS *TROUBLE*
I COULD *TELL* FROM THE WAY SHE MADE ME FEEL THE WAY I DID ABOUT HER
I HOPE ORIUM DROWNS HER I HOPE SHE *PAYS*
HE MORE LIKELY SENT HER *HOME*, AS HE DID WITH US.
SHE MAY NOT PAY AT ALL
BUT *YOU* WILL!
OH, *SHINNSA* NOT *NOW*
GONE YOU!
OH, NO!
NOT ME
SAVE IT FOR *TIENA*, MAD GIRL~
IT WASN'T *MY* FAULT!
SHINNSA
CALM DOWN *PLEASE?*

PLEASE?
C'MON, WYTURE -
BEAUTIFUL WOMEN NEVER TURN ME DOWN
YOU'RE BREAKING WITH A LONG-STANDING TRADITION
BUT YOU HAVE SO MANY HERE TO CHOOSE FROM--YOU DON'T NEED ME
DEFINE NEED.
WOULD I LIVE WITHOUT YOU? YES
DO I NEED TO PROVE ANYTHING TO YOU? NO.
WOULD I ENJOY TRYING TO IMPRESS YOU? TRY ME
YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO IMPRESS ME MIGHT HAVE TO WAIT, SEAHN -
- SOMEONE ELSE IS ALREADY WAITING FOR YOU

THEY ARE? WHO?
IHROE?
YEAH THAT'LL WORK
MY LADY, HE HAS ENTERED HIS PLACE OF REST A WOMAN OFFERING AWAITS
I THOUGHT IHROE WAS UP TO SOMETHING
YOU'VE DONE WELL TO SEE THIS FOR ME, REKA
AS YOU HAVE SEEN IT FOR ME, MOTHER
I CAN'T BELIEVE WYTURE IS A PART OF THIS!
KEEP WATCHING

STORYTELLERS

Barbara Kesel — WRITER

Andy Smith — PENCILER

Rob Hunter — INKER

Sumi Pak — COLORIST

Dave Lanphear — LETTERER

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

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32
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Barbara Kesel
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Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently:

Ihroe, Tiena, and Empher, who have formed an alliance in the hopes of gaining power in House Sinister, go to Orium's watery palace to enlist the mad seer's aid. The plan goes awry when Tiena tries a secret attack of her own, but Orium is more powerful than she suspects. Shinnsa, who has been betrayed by Tiena, comes to kill her, but Orium washes them, and Empher, away. This leaves Ihroe of Dexter, Orium's long-time confidante, to his wrath. Knowing what Ihroe has long wanted, Orium feels his own plans are best served by giving Ihroe what she desires: Seahn.

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SEAHN
IF YOU ONLY KNEW HOW OFTEN I'VE DREAMED
OF ME?
ALWAYS YOU
ME
OH, IHROE
IHROE, WHAT ARE WE DOING
YOU AND ME?
WHY ARE YOU HERE?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, IHROE?
SEAHN!

GET AWAY!
GET AWAY?
THAT'S A SURPRISING THING TO HEAR FROM SOMEONE WHO SHOWS UP IN MY HOUSE IN MY BED!
BUT~
I DIDN'T
OH, DON'T TRY TO DENY IT
I KNOW YOUR TYPE.
GOOD GIRL, BAD BOY WE BOTH KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN HERE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU CAME HERE, THROE

BUT I AM GOING TO MAKE YOU TELL ME!
GNNNNH!
PYREM SENT YOU HERE, DIDN'T HE?
YAAAAGH!
YOU'RE HIS FAITHFUL LITTLE GUARD DOG
ARE YOU ALSO HIS SPY?
SEAHN, NO! IT'S NOT THAT AT ALL!

I WAS THE ONE WHO WANTED TO COME HERE NO ONE ELSE WAS NVOLVED
I WANTED TO COME TO YOU
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED
I SEE
AND CAD THAT I AM, I COMPLETELY M.S NTERPRETED THE GESTURE
HROE YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, KNOW WHY I HAVE BAD MEMORIES OF HOUSE DEXTER
AND I GUARD DEXTER'S COUNCIL, SO YOU THOUGHT
SO I DID MY BAD
PLEASE
LET'S START OVER
BEG NNING W.TH AN APOLOGY WHICH I W LL DE. VER IN MY MOST LOVING WAY
LET ME SHOW YOU HOW SORRY I AM
AGAIN AND AGAIN
SWEET, IN A FETID SORT OF WAY

THAT'S HARDLY ENOUGH CHALLENGE FOR YOU, SEAMN
SO IT'S TIME TO MAKE MORE
MHARRUT'S GAMEBOARD. THE TACTICIAN'S ARENA
AND GATEWAY TO HIDDEN WORLDS
HIDDEN FROM OTHERS

NOT ME

WHO--?

WYTURE!

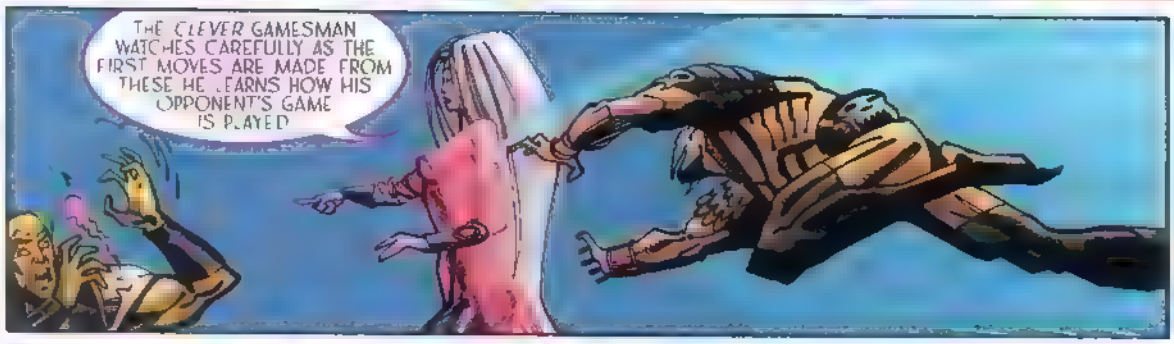
HOW DID YOJ BREACH MY GUARDSPELLS?

MHARRUT, [illegible]ESTION

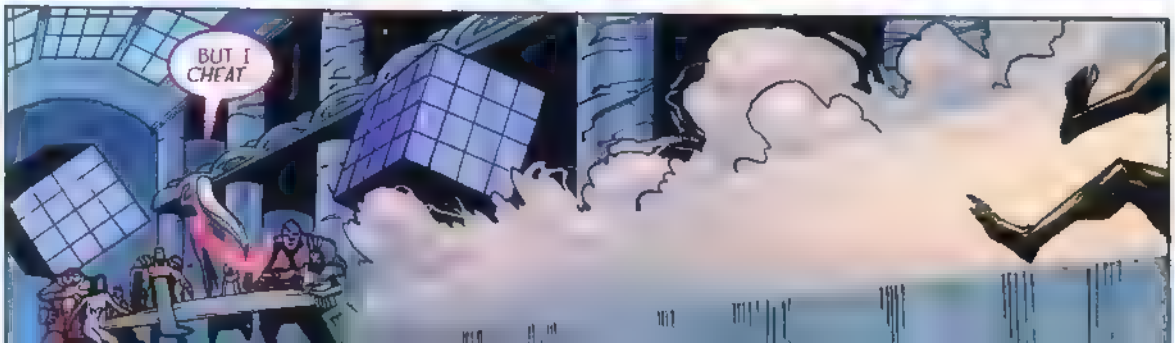
QUESTION YOU SHOULD BE ASKING WHY

WHY NOT HOW

LISTEN EVERYONE
THIS SECUNDAE, IN CASE YOU WERE UNAWARE, HAS BEEN MAKING HERSELF THE RIGHT HAND OF SEAHN LATELY~
DID HE SEND YOU HERE?
DOES HE KNOW OF OUR MEETINGS?
MHARRUT! I EXPECTED BETTER OF YOU!
LIVING WITHIN A GAMEBOARD HAS TAUGHT YOU NOTHING?
THE STRATEGIST SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO ASSUME HE KNOWS THE MOVEMENT OF NEW PIECES BY THEIR FORM


THE CLEVER GAMESMAN WATCHES CAREFULLY AS THE FIRST MOVES ARE MADE FROM THESE HE LEARNS HOW HIS OPPONENT'S GAME IS PLAYED

YOU ARE THE EXPERT PLAYER WHO KNOWS ALL THE RULES~
GRAWWR!


BUT I CHEAT

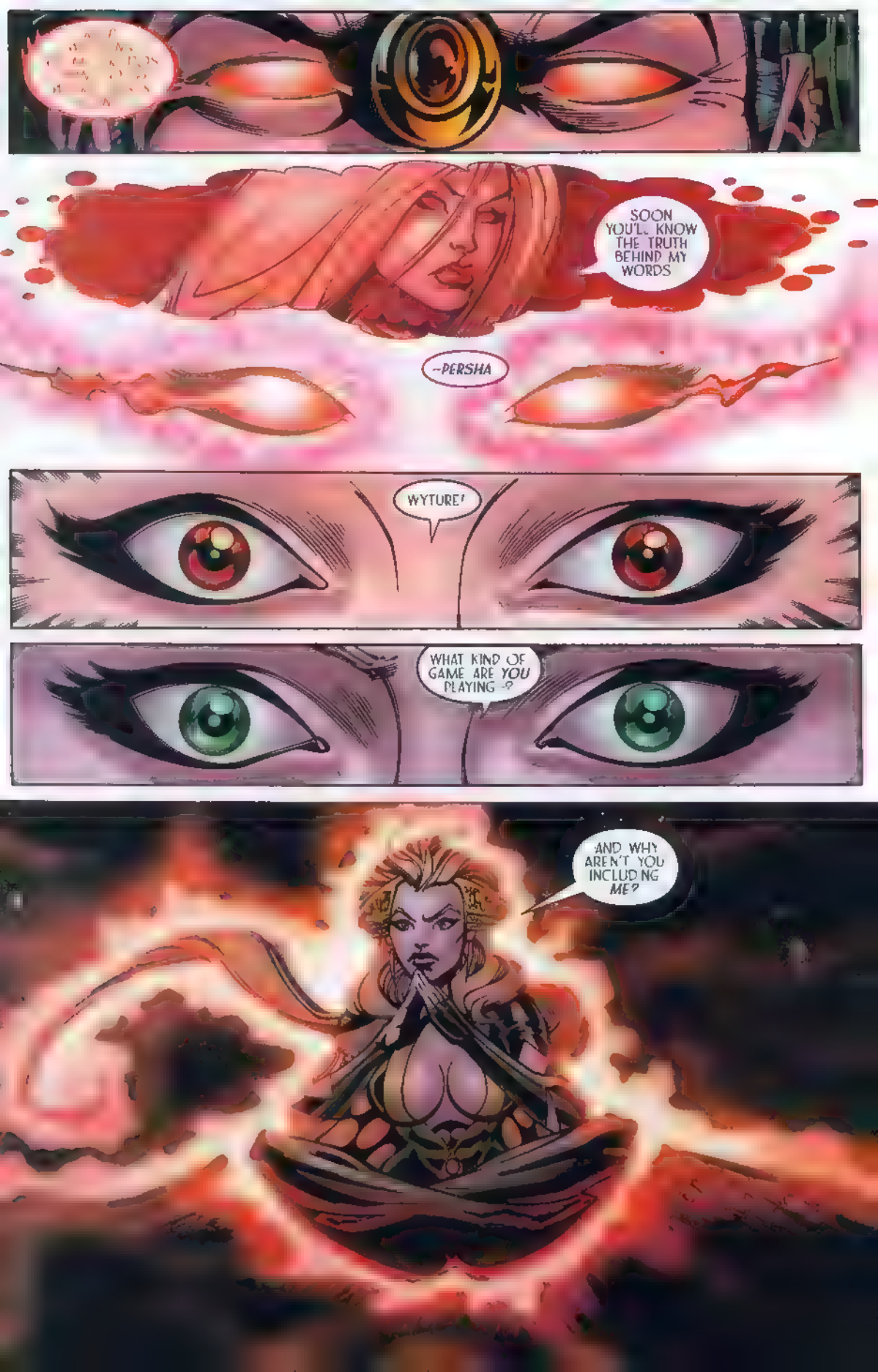
THIS GAME WILL ONLY END IN PAIN OR DEATH FOR YOU
WOULDN'T THE BEST MOVE BE TO SIT STILL AND LISTEN TO ME?
SHE IS SECUNDAE?
YES. THIERLEA. BY EVERY LAW WE KNOW
" SHE SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO BEST ONE OF OUR NUMBER "
YOU?
MAGIN, YOU AREN'T EVEN ONE OF THEM
WHY ARE YOU INVOLVED IN THIS PLOTTING?
DON'T TRY HIDING FROM ME-
--I KNOW WHAT YOU REALLY ARE

IT'S YOUR MOVE, MHARRUT
YOU CAN EITHER DECIDE TO TRUST ME ENOUGH TO LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY -
--OR I GO BACK TO SEAHN TELL HIM WHERE YOU'RE ALL COLLECTED, AND LET *HIM* ASK YOU WHAT YOU'RE PLOTTING HERE
BUT, NO -
--THAT WOULDN'T BE USEFUL FOR HIM
YOUR MISTAKE ALL YOU FIRST, S THAT YOU VIEW SEAHN ONLY AS A THREAT
I SEE HIM AS *POTENTIAL*
HE WILL HELP *PREPARE* YOU
PREPARE US?
FOR *WHAT?*
OPPORTUNITY

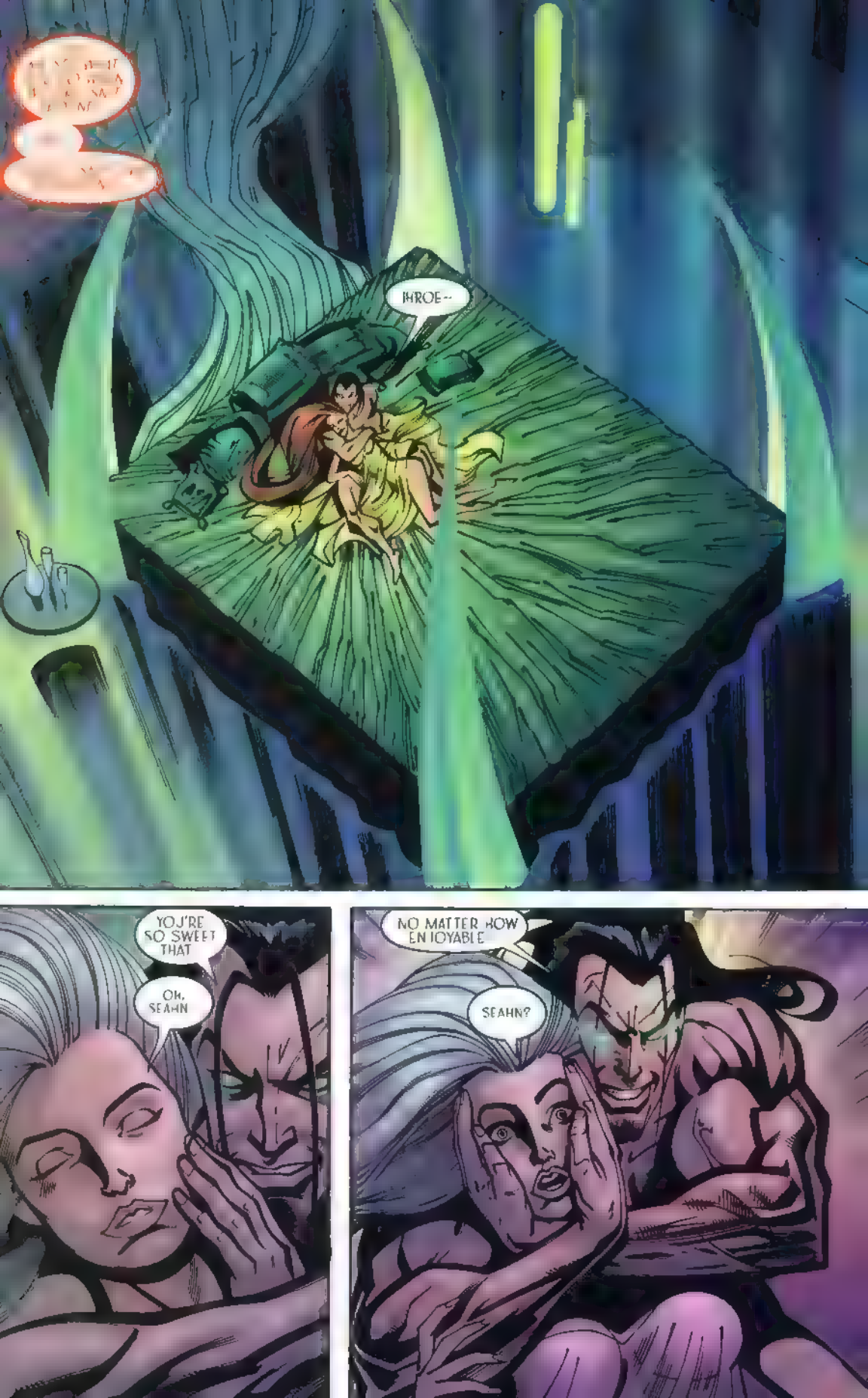
ALL OF YOU ARE ALREADY INVOLVED .N A BIGGER GAME, EVEN THOUGH ITS PAINS HAVE YET TO TOUCH YOU
YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN LIFE
BUT YOU INVOLVE YOURSELF .N SMALL WARS
--BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO CONCEPTION OF YOUR RELATIVE SIZE

"IF YOU WERE TO BE THROWN INTO THAT BATTLE AT THIS MOMENT~
"~YOU WOULD NOT, EVEN THOUGH WARFARE IS FAMILIAR TO YOU
"~BE PREPARED FOR THE ENEMY YOU WOULD FIND ON *THIS* PARTICULAR BATTLEFIELD
"YOU WOULD QUICKLY BE OVERWHELMED~
" BE RETURNED TO YOUR PREVIOUS STATE
"~BECOME SMALL PIECES ONCE AGAIN"

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH! THAT IS RIDICULOUS!
HOW DARE YOU VIOLATE THIS SANCTUARY AND MAKE SUCH PREPOSTEROUS CLAIMS, YOU
PULL IN YOUR CLAWS, MINITY
BEFORE YOU LOSE ALL OF THEM
MY ARM!
YOU OVERPOWER ME?
IMPOSSIBLE YOU CAN'T BE SECUNDAE
WHAT ARE YOU?
SIMPLY TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION
YOU SHOULD ALL THINK ABOUT WHAT I'VE SAID
AND WHAT YOU'VE SEEN


SOON YOU'LL KNOW THE TRUTH BEHIND MY WORDS
-PERSHA
WYTURE!
WHAT KIND OF GAME ARE YOU PLAYING -?
AND WHY AREN'T YOU INCLUDING ME?

WYTURE, ENSON THEY RE BOTH MORE THAN THEY SEEM BUT NOT SO CLEARLY THAT I CAN SEE HOW
NOW, SEAHN–
HE'S ONLY DIFFERENT LIKE ME
IF SO DIFFERENT FROM ME
THAT WE SEEM PERFECTLY MATCHED
OH SEAHN
OPEN YOUR EYES TO ME

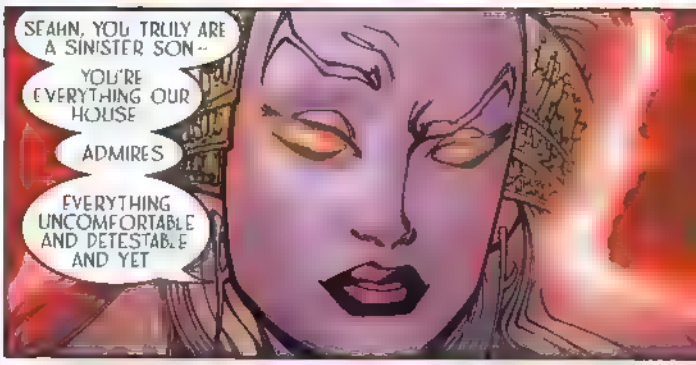

IHROE--
YOU'RE SO SWEET THAT
OH, SEAHN
NO MATTER HOW ENJOYABLE
SEAHN?

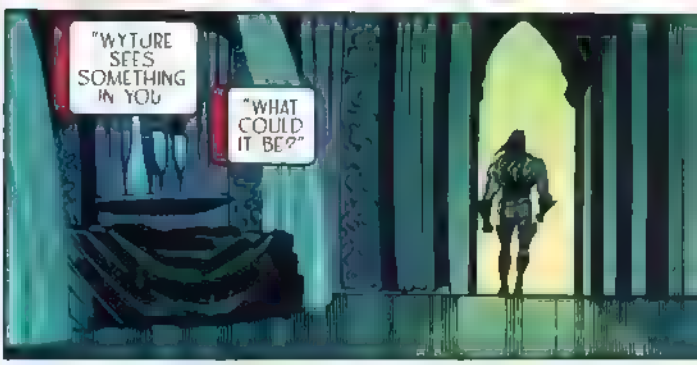
I'M AFRAID I JUST CAN'T TRUST THAT THIS IS REAL
NNNNGYAAAH!
GNNH!
I'LL SHIELD YOU WON'T
WON'T? THERE'S NOT MUCH I WON'T
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU
WHAT YOU WILL IS GO HOME
WITH A MESSAGE

"TELL PYREM I ENJOYED THE MESSENGER"
THE SEER?
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HER?
KEEP YOUR SPIES OUT OF MY HOUSE, PYREM

THAT'LL GET NOTICED

PYREM WILL BE THINKING TWICE ABOUT SENDING ANY MORE SPIES MY WAY


SEAHN, YOU TRULY ARE A SINISTER SON--
YOU'RE EVERYTHING OUR HOUSE ADMIRES
EVERYTHING UNCOMFORTABLE AND DETESTABLE AND YET


"WYTURE SEES SOMETHING IN YOU
"WHAT COULD IT BE?"

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING WYTURE
NO APOLOGY NECESSARY
I KEPT MYSELF AMUSED
A SMALL GAME

SO FLOWS THE VISCOUS OFFSPRING OF RANDOM ACTS, FATE, SCION OF TIME AND CHANCE
TIDES TWIST STRANGELY, TRAPPING IHROE TURNING ASIDE FOR WYTORE
FLOWING FORWARD NOW FASTER
RUSHING TOWARD THE SINGING INEVITABLE
THANK YOU, IHROE
YOU PERFORMED EXACTLY AS EXPECTED
SO SHALL THE SECUNDAE RISE

STORYTELLERS

Barbara Kesel — WRITER

Ron Wagner — PENCILLER

Armando Durruthy — INKER

Dean White — COLORIST

Dave Lanphear — LETTERER

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Andy Smith
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Currently:

Orium gives Ihroe what she wanted, Seahn, but the gift is more of a curse. Seahn takes advantage of Ihroe's willingness before sending her back home to House Dexter in a coma with a warning to Dexter's Leader, Pyrem, who Seahn mistakenly believes was behind Ihroe's visit to House Sinister. Wyture amuses herself while waiting for Seahn by confronting a conspiracy organized by the tactician Mharrut. She chides them for indulging in little wars when a big one is coming. Observing all this makes Persha question the motive of her friend Wyture. Also watching are the mad seer Orium and the Secundae witch Tiena, both clearly linking the deed to their own plans for the future...

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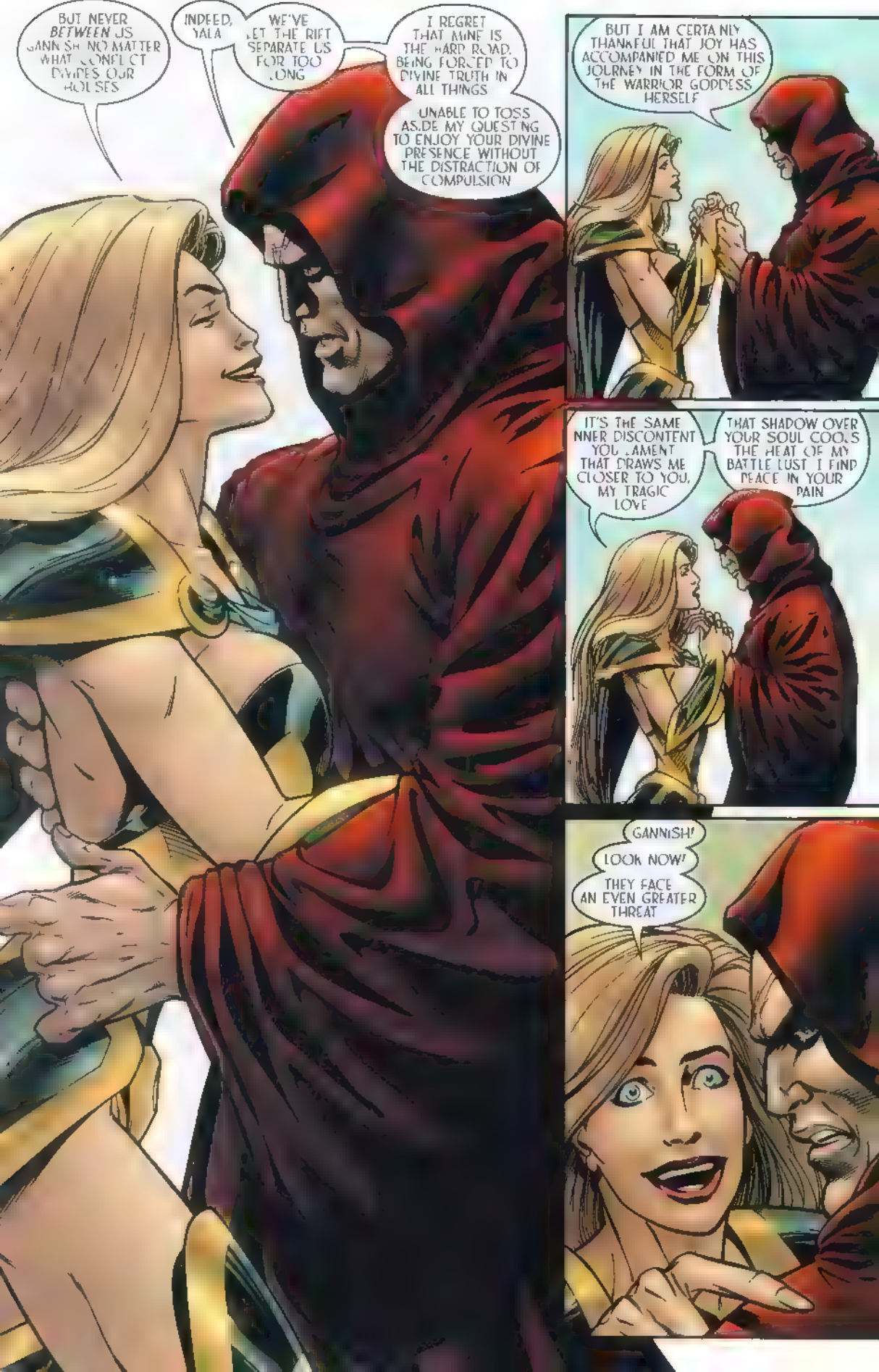
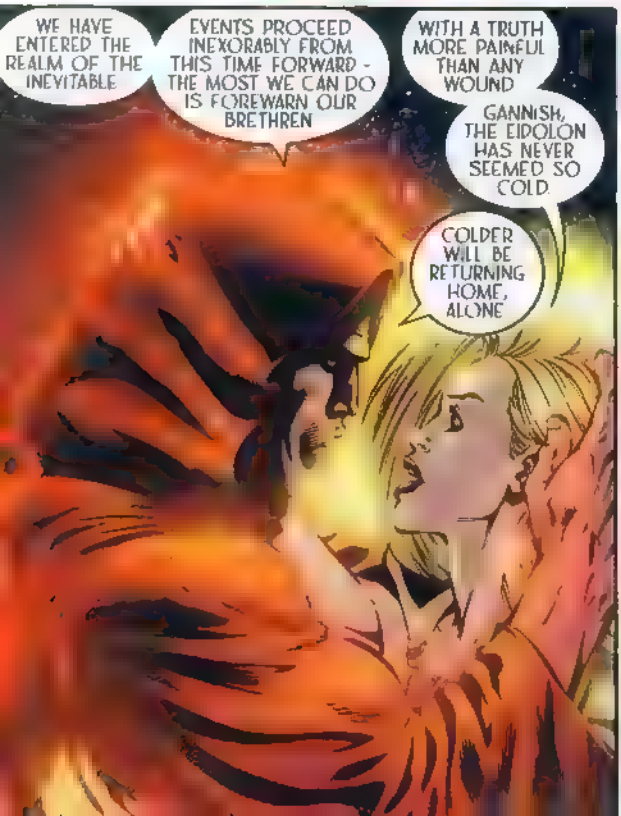
"LOOK AT THOSE CREATURES!
"THE FIGHTING WILL BE BRUTAL, BLOODY AND INTENSE!
"LET'S JOIN IN!"

NO, YALA--YOU KNOW WHAT MUST HAPPEN HERE
BUT--BUT IT'S BEEN DAYS SINCE I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO FLEX MY MUSCLES GANNISH!
SURELY THERE'S TIME TO INDULGE IN ONE QUICK SPAR
OUR COMING HERE TO EARTH HAS GRANTED ME THE ANSWERS I NEEDED ABOUT THESE PEOPLE AND THEIR RELATION TO US
TRAINING THEM HAS TAUGHT US BOTH MORE ABOUT POWER
WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM DANIK HAS CLARIFIED OUR TRUE ROLE IN THE LARGER UNIVERSE
IT IS NOW TIME TO GO HOME AND SHARE THESE TRUTHS
BUT I'VE BEEN SO GOOD ABOUT LETTING THE ATLANTEANS LEARN ON THEIR OWN, GANNISH--
CAN'T I WIN THIS ONE FOR THEM?
IT PAINS ME TO DENY YOU ANY DESIRE, MY LOVE
-BUT THIS IS THEIR BATTLE NOT OURS
OURS BEGINS WITH A VOLLEY OF TRUTHS
WHICH WILL ESCALATE INTO WARFARE ENOUGH EVEN FOR YOU

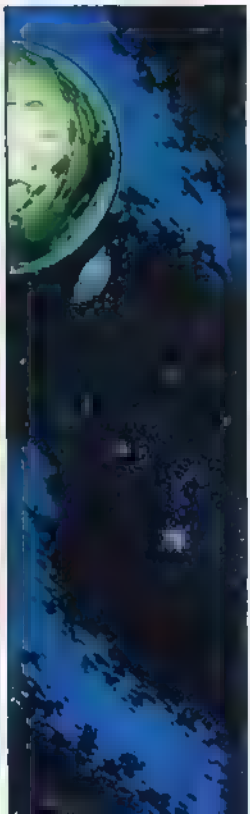

BUT NEVER BETWEEN US GANNISH NO MATTER WHAT CONFLICT DIVIDES OUR HOUSES
INDEED, YALA
WE'VE LET THE RIFT SEPARATE US FOR TOO LONG
I REGRET THAT MINE IS THE HARD ROAD, BEING FORCED TO DIVINE TRUTH IN ALL THINGS
UNABLE TO TOSS ASIDE MY QUESTING TO ENJOY YOUR DIVINE PRESENCE WITHOUT THE DISTRACTION OF COMPULSION
BUT I AM CERTAINLY THANKFUL THAT JOY HAS ACCOMPANIED ME ON THIS JOURNEY IN THE FORM OF THE WARRIOR GODDESS HERSELF
IT'S THE SAME INNER DISCONTENT YOU LAMENT THAT DRAWS ME CLOSER TO YOU, MY TRAGIC LOVE
THAT SHADOW OVER YOUR SOUL COOLS THE HEAT OF MY BATTLE LUST I FIND PEACE IN YOUR PAIN
GANNISH!
LOOK NOW!
THEY FACE AN EVEN GREATER THREAT

"BUT I SUPPOSE YOU STILL DON'T WANT ME TO GO PLAY"
"WE HAVE DONE WHAT WE CAN TO AUGMENT THEIR PROBABILITY OF SURVIVAL
"AS DANIK COUNSELED US WE MUST NOW LET THESE REAWAKENED ANCIENTS BE MASTERS OF THEIR OWN FATES"
VERY WELL, BUT I EXPECT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT I SACRIFICED THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU
A TRIUMPH OF WILL OVER WANTS YALA
AS IS MY RETURN TO ELYSIA
CARRYING THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WILL RUIN US ALL

WE MUST RETURN TO OUR SEPARATE HOUSES FROM HERE, MY BELOVED
INGRA WILL NEVER BELIEVE MY WORDS IN YOUR PRESENCE
THEN THERE'S NO AVOIDING WHAT COMES NEXT?
NO, YALA


WE HAVE ENTERED THE REALM OF THE INEVITABLE
EVENTS PROCEED INEXORABLY FROM THIS TIME FORWARD - THE MOST WE CAN DO IS FOREWARN OUR BRETHREN
WITH A TRUTH MORE PAINFUL THAN ANY WOUND
GANNISH, THE EIDOLON HAS NEVER SEEMED SO COLD
COLDER WILL BE RETURNING HOME, ALONE

FAREWELL FOR NOW, MY LOVE
MAY WE NOT BE PARTED FOR LONG THIS TIME YALA



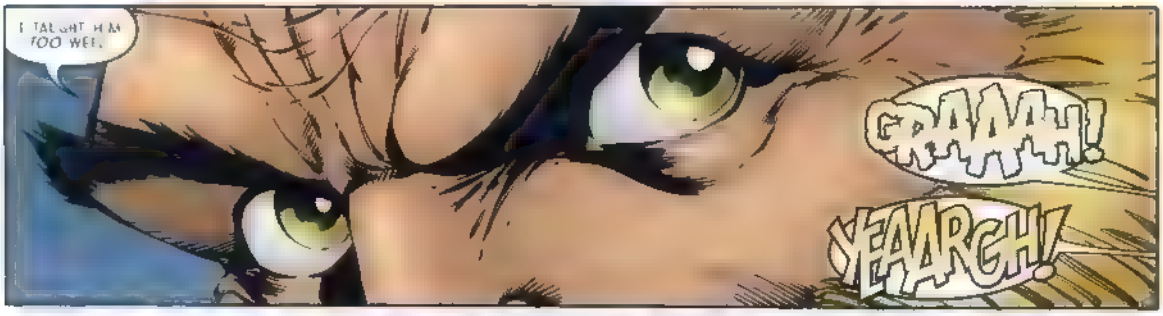
Returning to the familiar trails of my House, anticipatory dread pierced my heart through with its staccato talons.
My necessary task weighted it down, the loathesome burden threatening to break me.
It is ever the burden of the truthseer to act as executioner of reality.
The first to be informed was Sinister's Leader.
But at the site of her castle there stood not the red witch of anger...
...but evidence of her betrayal and fall.
The instigator of this obliteration was obvious.

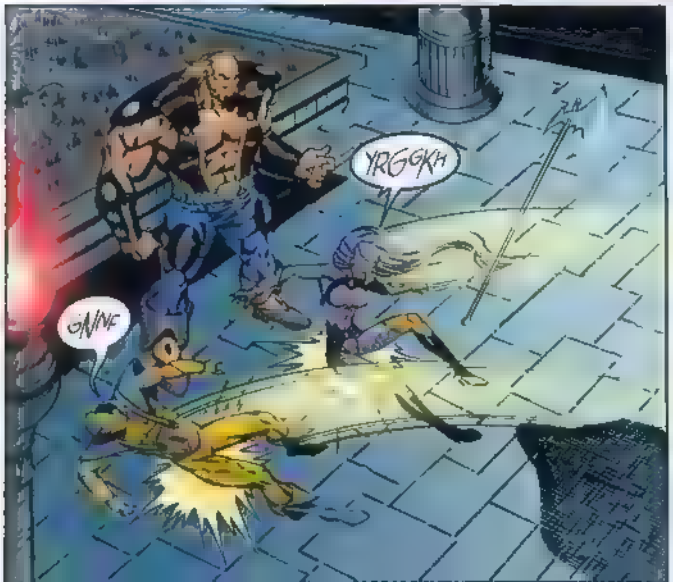
Seahn.
LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY?
SEAHN.
THEN INGRA STILL LIES CAPTIVE ON ERVULSH'S WORLD?
DON'T KNOW, DON'T CARE, AS LONG AS SHE'S NOT *HERE*
THINGS HAVE CHANGED GANNISH
HOUSE SINISTER IS *MINE* NOW
MY CITY.
SO *BOW* TO YOUR NEW LEADER!
BOW TO AN IGNORANT INSUBORDINATE *YOUNGSTER?*
YOU *FLATTER* YOURSELF, SECUNDAE!

OH, YEAH~ SECUNDAE!
AND THE DAYS OF OUR DOMINATION BY THE FIRST ARE OVER!
ALTWAAL'S GIFT SHOULD LET YOU OVERPOWER ME
YOU MUST HAVE SORELY OVERTAXED YOUR INTERNAL STORE!
NO TALKING NO DISTRACTIONS
LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT, GANNISH!
IS THAT IT?
THAT'S ENOUGH OF THIS CHILDISH DISPLAY
THERE IS GREATER DAMAGE TO BE DONE

YA. A! WELCOME BACK!
YALA!
DIJANJI!
WHY ARE YOU AWAY FROM YOUR TRAINING? I LEFT INSTRU
TRENIN RELEASED US FOR THE DAY
HE SAID YOU TOLD HIM HE COULD BORROW YOUR ESTATE
TRENIN SAID WHAT?

DAMN THAT BOY
SEAHN HAS CHOSEN THE MOST DEFENSIBLE POSITION 'N ALL OF SINISTER!


I TAUGHT HIM TOO WELL.
GRAAAAH!
YEAARGH!


YRGGKH
GNNG

WELCOME HOME, YALA
YOU'VE MET INDORIENNE AND SCHULGIN?
BACK WHEN YOU LIVED IN HOUSE DEXTER, WE WERE ALL ON THE HIGH COUNCIL TOGETHER
YOU'VE BEEN GONE SO LONG YOU PROBABLY DON'T REMEMBER YOUR PEERS

TRENIN!
YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME IN MY HOME, BUT
HOW DARE YOU BREAK TRAINING!
YA.A, MY FRIEND, I'D HAVE ASKED FOR YOUR PERMISSION
--BUT YOU WERE OFF WITH GANNISH
WE'RE PLANNING A SMALL COUP
WE COULD USE YOUR HELP
BETRAYER!
NOT HARDLY

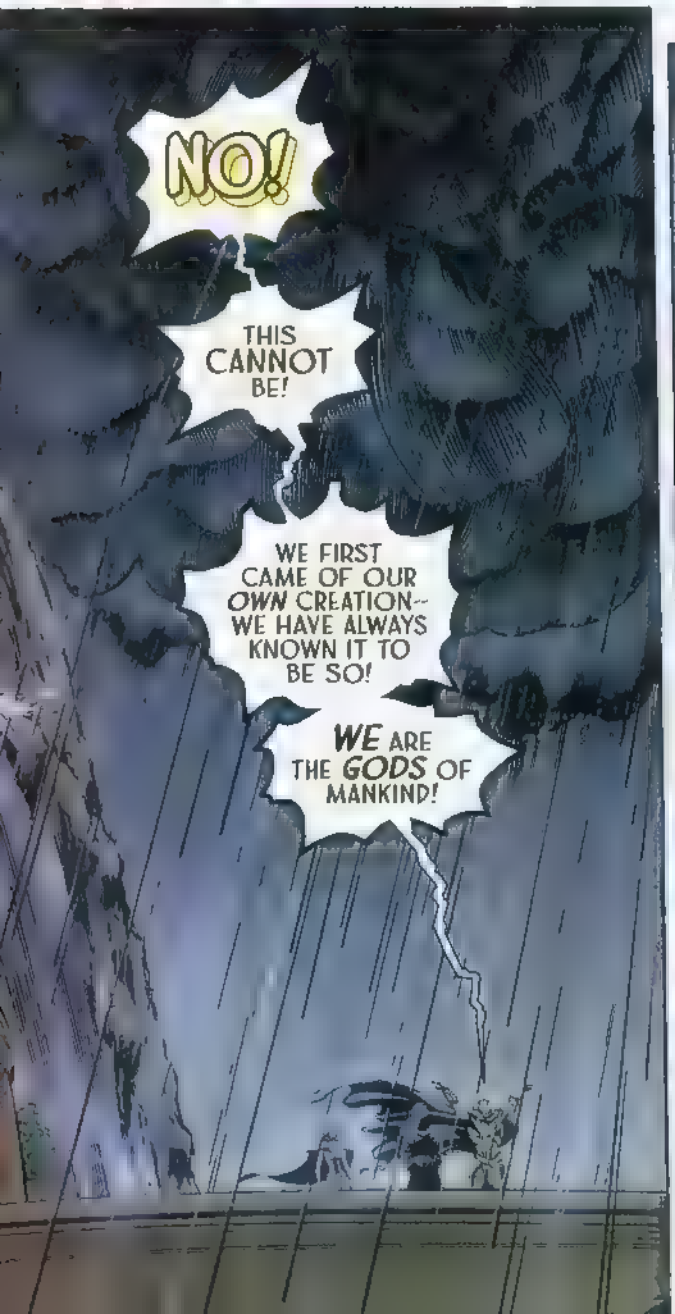
PYREM AND THE COUNCIL AREN'T DOING A THING ABOUT THE DANGER OF SEAHN, SO WE WILL
HE'S TAKEN HOUSE SINISTER, YOU KNOW
BUT WE'RE MISSING IHROE--SEAHN DELIVERED HER HOME IN A COMA AFTER SOME M.SADVENTURE
AND DID YOU KNOW INGRA IS HERE ..IVING AT PYREM'S ESTATE?
BUT BUT I WASN'T GONE THAT LONG!
TRENIN, SO MUCH HAS CHANGED, OR IS ABOUT TO CHANGE
YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHERE I'VE BEEN, WHAT GANNISH AND I HAVE LEARNED
OH, STAND DOWN, YOU TWO!
THERE'LL BE NO FURTHER ATTACKS FROM ME
UNLESS YOU'D LIKE TO FIGHT SOME MORE!

I'LL BE BACK TO FINISH THE TALE, TRENIN-
GANNISH NEEDS ME!
I'VE OFTEN DREAMED OF SEEING YOU CROSS THE BRIDGE INTO DEXTER TO BE BY MY SIDE GANNISH!
TODAY MY DREAMS COME TRUE!
AS PRELUDE TO THE NIGHTMARE THAT FOLLOWS
PERHAPS SO, BUT I'M STILL GLAD THAT I CAN BE THERE WITH YOU WHEN YOU TELL--
PYREM!

YALA WELCOME!
GANNISH IT'S AN UNUSUAL PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO GREET YOU ON DEXTER'S SOIL
YES, GANNISH WHATEVER BRINGS YOU ACROSS THE EIDOLON MUST BE POTENTIALLY CATASTROPHIC
WE HAVE COME WITH TROUBLESOME NEWS PYREM
IT'S BEST IF GANNISH TELLS IT SO YOU KNOW IT'S THE TRUTH
WE HAVE JUST COME FROM A WORLD
THAT HOLDS THE ANSWER TO OUR GREATEST RIDDLE
THE REST IS FOR YOUR EARS FIRST PYREM
WHY HAVE YOU REALLY BROUGHT HIM HERE YALA?
IF HE DOES ANY HARM TO PYREM
YOUR EMPATHIC TALENTS WILL VERIFY THAT WHAT I TELL YOU NOW IS THE TRUTH

YOU ARE AWARE, I KNOW, THAT *ENSON* IS MUCH *MORE* THAN A SECUNDAE
HE SENT ME OFF TO A SMALL WORLD THAT HOUSES A POPULATION MORE ANCIENT THAN OURS
THE WORLD THAT SPAWNED OUR *CREATOR*
GANNISH *NO*

WHAT SORT OF PLOT ARE YOU TWO UNLEASHING HERE?
I CAN'T LET IT INTERFERE W THE *MINE*


NO!
THIS CANNOT BE!
WE FIRST CAME OF OUR *OWN* CREATION-- WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN IT TO BE SO!
WE ARE THE *GODS* OF MANKIND!

THE SKIES REFLECT YOUR HEART'S TURMOIL, PYREM
WHAT CAN I SAY TO *CONVINCE* YOU AND PUT THE STORM TO REST?
NOTHING MORE
I *KNOW* YOUR WORDS ARE TRUE

WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT THIS PAIN TO ME GANNISH?

REASH, YOU MUST COME RIGHT AWAY!
T'S GANNISH
HE'S WITH PYREM, AND YOU KNOW HOW ERRATIC HE IS
WHAT--
HE'S COME TO ATTACK PYREM--
SOME KIND OF PSYCHIC ASSAULT
I CAN'T FIGHT HIM OFF ALONE, GANI, HE'S TOO POWERFUL
--IS GAINED--

IT'S THE SUPPORT OF DEXTER'S HIGH COUNCIL THAT WILL HELP HIM PREVAIL AGAINST THIS ATTACK, ORDAL!
IF NOT I'M AFRAID FOR MY ADOPTED HOUSE
--BY TEARING--
WILL YOU HELP HIM, RAAMIA?
CAN'T YOU SEE HOW DANGEROUS GANNISH CAN BE?
Oh, Ingra
I SEE THE STORY BEHIND IT ALL!
YOUR pleas... AND you.
--US DOWN!

I KNOW NO WORDS TO OFFER WHICH WOULD EASE THE FAMI..AR AGONY OF *KNOWING*

ESPECIALLY SINCE IT IS YOUR CURSE TO *FEEL* IT ALL

GYAAAH!

GANNISH!

AH GOOD. THE CAVALRY HAS ARRIVED

PYREM, MY LOVE, WHATEVER HAS BEEN DONE TO YOU *WILL* BE AVENGED

GHNNN

DID YOU THINK PYREM WAS *UNPROTECTED?*

INC..TE

NO, REASH. YOU *DON'T* UNDERSTAND--!

OH, YES, YALA

I *DO*. YOU HAVE SIDED WITH THE MAN WHO IS TRY NG TO KILL OUR LEADER!

THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU, REASH. YOU'RE USUALLY THE VOICE OF REASON

IT'S *HER*. SOMEHOW *INGRA'S* CAUSING THIS!

GANNISH IS THE ONLY DANGER HERE!

TRAITOR!

NO! *LISTEN* TO ME!

LISTEN TO ONE WHO FIGHTS AGAINST HER *OWN*, YA, A?

GNYAAH

I REMEMBER WHEN WE WERE ALLIES, GANNISH--

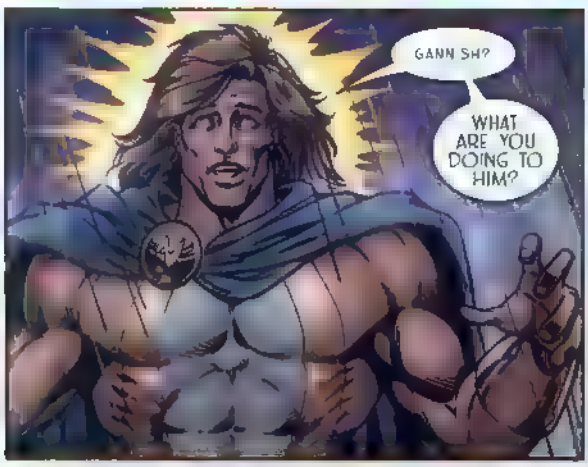
I REGRET IT HAS COME TO TH.S

STOP! YOU MUST KNOW

NO! YOU WON'T HELP SEAHN TAKE TH.S HOUSE TOO!

GANNISH!

YALA


GANN SH?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HIM?

GANN SH?
WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO HIM?

ST P.

CALM HEADS, EVERYONE
THERE'S BEEN A TERRIBLE MISUNDERSTANDING HERE
GANNISH HAS NOT COME TO HARM ME, HE'S COME TO ENLIGHTEN ME
HOWEVER PAINFUL THE TRUTH MAY BE
NOW THAT I KNOW SOME MEASURE OF THE ANGUISH YOU MUST CARRY, I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU KEEP YOUR SCARS, GANNISH
COME TO COUNCIL I'LL JOIN YOU THERE, AND ALL FIRST INTERESTED IN HEARING THE TRUTH FROM MY LIPS SHOULD JOIN US
FATHER THERE'S SUCH GRAVITY TO YOUR WORDS
HAVE WE REACHED OUR ENDING BEFORE WE'VE HAD A CHANCE TO REUNITE?

So begins the twilight of the First.
As much as I knew what was to be done was what must be done...
...I bear the guilt for exposing the mystery behind our majesty.
Beseiged by truth without answers, I must press on...
Burdened by foresight
will engulf the perfection of Elysia.
My certainty leaves me no peace, no solution, only a name for our destroyer.
Somehow, behind it all
Danik

STORYTELLERS

Barbara Kesel
WRITER

Andy Smith
PENCILER

Rob Hunter & John Dell
INKERS

Sumi Pak & Morry Hollowell
COLORISTS

Dave Lanphear
LETTERER

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

President Chief Executive Officer & Publisher • **Mark Alessi**
Senior Vice President Chief Creative Officer • **Gina M. Villa**
Vice President Writing Development • **Barbara Kesel**
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CrossGen
34
SEPT.
THE FIRST
Barbara Kesel
Andy Smith
Robin Riggs
Morry Hollowell
USA $2.95 CAN $4.00
crossgen.com

They are the First

Immortal godlings, they believe themselves to be the creators of the universe. In their minds, nothing came before them, and nothing equals them. They inhabit Elysia, the bright center of the universe from which they can visit the worlds below to inspire love, longing, and war.

Centuries ago, strife caused the bisection of their city into two parts: House Dexter, home to the selfless; and House Sinister, home to the selfish. The two sides rarely mix; transit to the other House causes a loss of power proportionate to the power held by each of the First. Grand battles have been put aside; political skirmishes, vying for the most attractive mates, and toying with the inhabitants of the many worlds below now occupy the First's days.

Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae. Seahn has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently:

Gannish and Yala have returned from their secret journey to Earth with disturbing news. Gannish intends to tell Ingra, but finds that Seahn has taken over leadership of House Sinister, and Gannish chooses not to waste time with the youngster. Deciding to inform Pyrem, Gannish joins Yala in House Dexter, and finds the Leader of that house now has Ingra by his side. When the truthseer Gannish tells the empathic Pyrem that he has been to the world of their creator, Pyrem is torn by the conflicting truths. The First believe they created themselves. If Gannish has learned of a creator, that cannot be true... Reacting to Pyrem's pain, Ingra gathers House Dexter's warriors to attack Gannish...

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RUN!
RUN FOR YOUR IMMORTAL LIVES!

ROWER!!
BY ALTWAAL'S EYES, WHAT'S CAUSED THIS PANIC?
A MENACE BEYOND COMPREHENSION HAS SET FOOT ON ELYSIA!
LOOK FOR YOURSELF, INPORIENNE
SEE?
ALL I SEE ARE TWO WOMEN THEY ARE THE MENACE?
IT'S SO PRETTY HERE THEY'VE MADE THE CITY BIGGER
MORE COMPLICATED
LINDY, THESE WERE MY FIRST TOYS
THERE WAS A TOWER THEIR FORT
FIRST THERE WAS ALTWAAL I MADE ACCESSORIES FOR HIM
YOUR CIRCLET THIS GAUNTLET
THEN HE NEEDED PLAYMATES
GOOD SOLDIERS, BAD SOLDIERS
EVERY ONE A LITTLE DIFFERENT

EACH WAS SHAPED AROUND AN INTENTION
THERE WAS THE HAPPY ONE, THE SAD ONE
ONE FOR EVERY POSSIBLE DESCRIPTION OF WHAT YOU COULD FEEL
I WAS DIFFERENT WHEN I MADE YOU, PYREM LIMITED.
CHILDLIKE
WE ARE YOUR TOYS
..WE'RE NOTHING BUT TOYS!
ANDRA--
THEY'RE NOT TAKING THIS WELL
EVEN IF IT'S TRUE--
YOU MIGHT WANT TO RETHINK YOUR PRESENTATION
QUICKLY
SHE'S HURTING PYREM!
ATTACK!
YOU WISH
EEP

GYAAAAH!

THEY'LL LET ME

NYAAAAH!

-BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO WAY TO STOP ME

MOST OF THE OTHER WEAPONS AREN'T IN ELYSIA ANYMORE BUT THERE'S ONE MORE WE CAN COLLECT HERE

AND ABOUT A *MILLION* POWERFUL PEOPLE BETWEEN US AND IT WHO AREN'T LIKELY TO WANT YOU TO TAKE THEIR UM TOYS

EEEYRRRK

BESIDES, ONCE PYREM *REALIZES* WHAT HE'S LEARNED TODAY

GYFFFH!

-HE WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP HIMSELF FROM *SHARING*

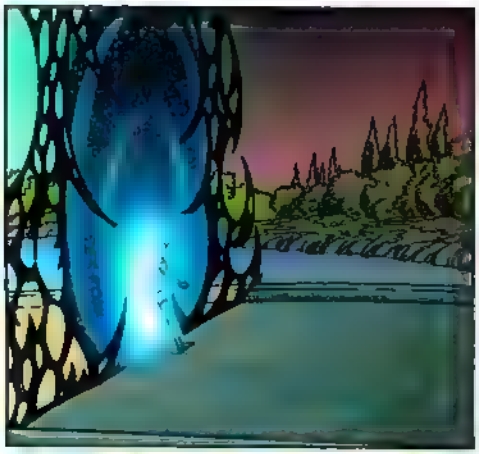
NOOOO!

WE ARE PLAYTHINGS OF A CHILD!
OUR CREATION WAS THE WHIM OF A CRIPPLED MIND NOT A MIRACLE OF OUR OWN MAKING!
PYREM-- STOP IT!
YOU'RE
YOU'RE
REFUSE
NO! HOW MANY HORRORS MUST I SURVIVE?
DON'T ASK ME TO RELAY THIS THOUGHT!
PYREM
YOU DO TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY LOVE
EVEN IF YOUR OUTBURST DOES PROVIDE GOOD COVER FOR MY
EXIT

WE'RE NOT REAL!
WE'RE TOYS--
INSUBSTANTIAL.
IRRELEVANT
UNREAL BEINGS
YOU MISUNDERSTAND, PYREM
YOU ARE REAL.
YOU MAY NOT BE BORN OF MAN, BUT YOU ARE REAL
HMMM
I DON'T KNOW THAT ONE
SOMETHING ABOUT HIM IS ANNOYINGLY FAMILIAR

THIS IS NEW
THE BUILDINGS?
THE CLIFF
THE TOWER WASN'T UP ON A MESA WHEN IT BEGAN
HOUSE DEXTER AND HOUSE SINISTER SHARED THE FIELD
HOUSE SINISTER?
AS IN EVIL?
AS IN INTENTION
THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS GOOD OR EVIL WITHOUT CONTEXT, EVEN THOUGH WE, LIKE ME WITH MY TOYS, TEND TO ASSIGN MEANING TO IMPULSES
I'M NOT SO SURE I FOLLOW YOU ON THAT
BUT YOU'RE THE PILOT SO I'LL AGREE WITH ANYTHING THAT KEEPS YOU FROM DROPPING ME
BUT EXPLAIN, PLEASE
GOOD AND EVIL RELATE TO MOTIVATION AND MOMENT
ACTIONS ARE NEUTRAL IT IS INTENTION THAT COLORS THE DEED
THOSE OF DEXTER INTEND TO DO RIGHT
THEY THINK OF THOSE BEYOND THEMSELVES
THOSE OF SINISTER RELATE TO THE LEFT, THE SIDE OF THE HEART THEIR OWN LIFE'S FORCE
THEY THINK ONLY OF THEMSELVES
ONLY TOYS CAN BE FORCED TO ONE SIDE OR ANOTHER YOU SIGIL BEARERS ARE FREE TO TAP EITHER HOUSE YOU'RE MORE INTERESTING
GREAT
I WAS EMPOWERED BY AN AMORAL GOD
BUT IF YOU RETURN MY SIGIL I PROMISE TO PROVIDE MANY MORAL QUANDARIES FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PAYING ATTENTION, HAVE YOU?
SORRY
ANDRA THIS PLACE HAS ME TOTALLY WEIRDED OUT, AND I DON'T FEEL GOOD
CAN WE DEBATE ETHICS LATER?
I DIDN'T PUT THAT THERE
IF I ASK *WHAT*, WILL YOU *REMEMBER* WHAT YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT?
THE BRIDGE THE GATE--
-THEY'RE *NEW*
DID YOU JUST *ANSWER* A *QUESTION*?
SO BRIDGE TO WHAT? GATE TO WHERE?
HOUSE SINISTER
YEAH
THAT NAME DOES NOT INSPIRE VISIONS OF SAFETY
BUT WHERE HERE DOES?
ANDRA
ANDRA'
WAIT FOR M



-EE?
HEY!

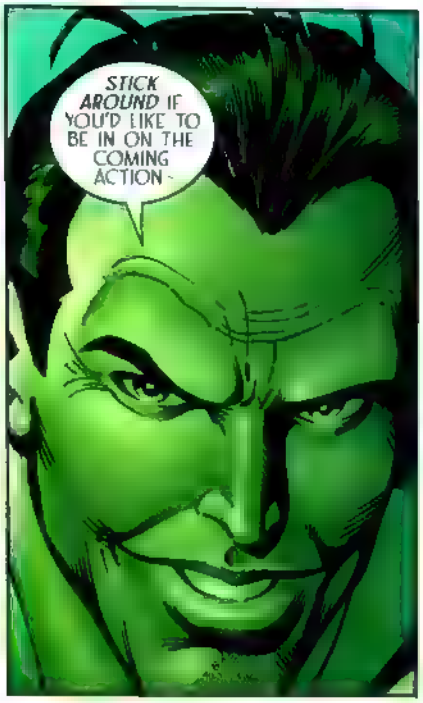
HEY!

WHAT--?
RUN THAT BY ME AGAIN?
JUST BECAUSE I DUMPED INGRA OFF HER THRONE DOESN'T MEAN I KNOW EVERYTHING SHE WAS UP TO.
RHORF
BEFORE YOUR ASCENSION, SEAHN, SHE HAD SENT US TO SPY ON THESE SIGIL BEARERS.
WE'VE LOST SOME OF OUR NUMBER AND OTHERS, LIKE THAT WRETCHED TWIT TSANSUELLE-
DON'T FORGET AHRROH
AND HIM--THEY'VE GONE NATIVE AMONG THE MORTALS AND HAVE CUT OFF ALL CONTACT
BUT LET ME CORRECT MYSELF--
INGRA COMMANDED US TO GO. BUT NOW--
WITH HER SAFELY DEPOSED
WE ARE HERE TO PLACE OUR SERVICES AT THE WHIM OF THE NEW MASTER OF HOUSE SINISTER
AND, OF COURSE YOU'D NEVER BE SAYING THE SAME THING TO HER IF OUR POSITIONS WERE REVERSED

OF COURSE NOT!
YOU SCREWED UP, DIDN'T YOU?
UHH
I
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN!
IF YOU WERE MY SPY, AND YOU CAME HOME WILLING TO SELL INFORMATION TO MY SUCCESSOR, WELL .
I WOULDN'T TAKE IT WELL
GNAAAAAH!

AND GUESS WHAT?
YOU'D LOSE

EVERYBODY PAYING ATTENTION?
NOW THAT YOU KNOW MY WAY OF DEALING WITH PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY CAN WORK ME
-YOU CAN GUESS WHO'S GOING TO END UP ON TOP

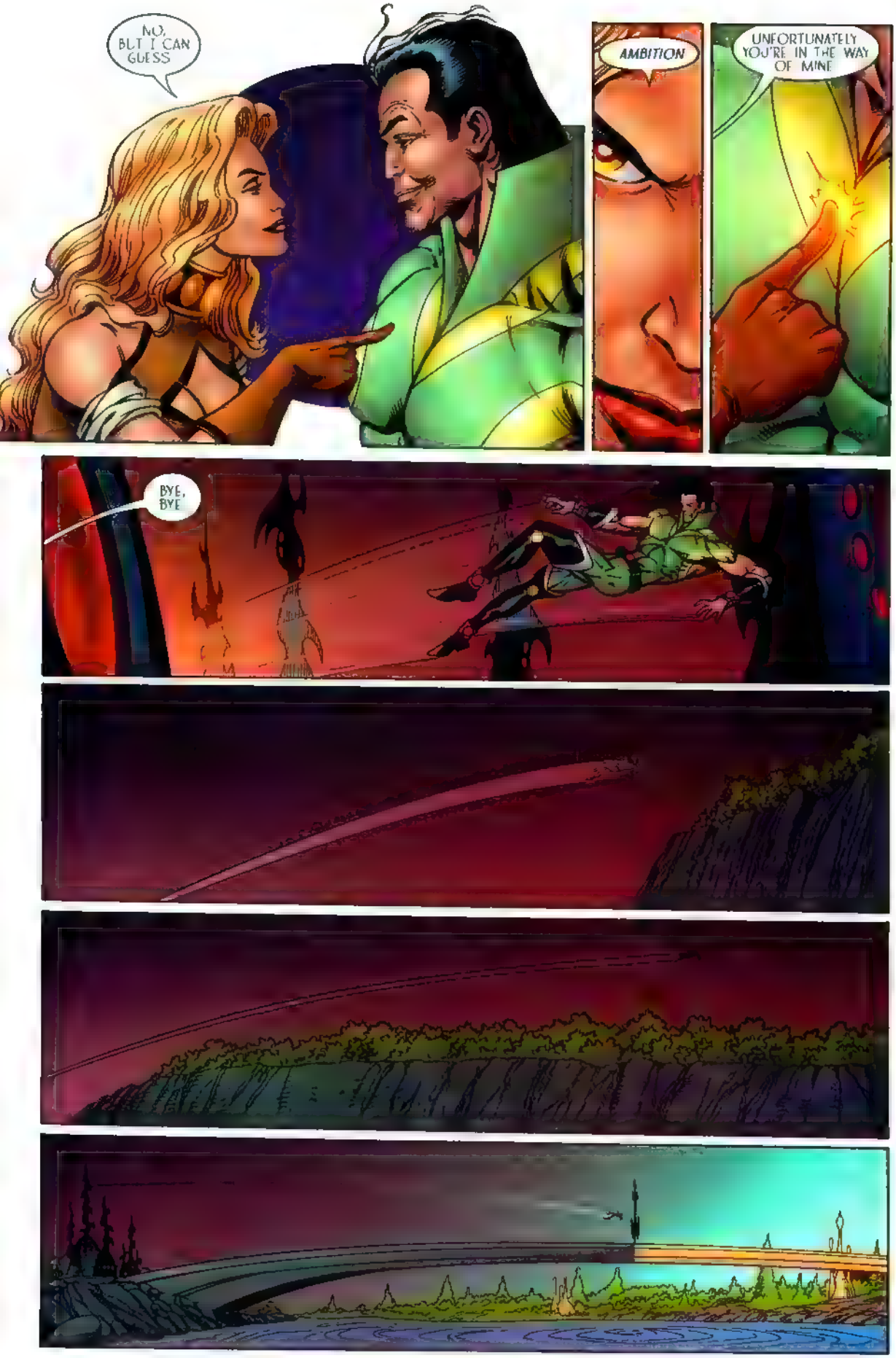

STICK AROUND IF YOU'D LIKE TO BE IN ON THE COMING ACTION -

DON'T EVER LET ME SEE YOU AGAIN IF YOU DON'T
SO
--HERE'S WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO FOR ME NOW

WYTURE I KNOW WHAT SEAHN IS, BUT WHY DO YOU NEED TO SPEND SO MUCH TIME AT HIS SIDE?

SEAHN!
AS LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER, IT IS FITTING YOU BE MADE AWARE THAT YOUR HOUSE HAS BEEN *INVADED*
BUT I SEE YOU'RE *BUSY*
INVADED?
WHAT, MHARRUT, COULD POSSIBLY *INVADE* ELYSIA? IS THIS ONE OF YOUR WAR GAMES? I'M KIND OF *BUSY* HERE
SEE FOR YOURSELF--
"THIS WOMAN MOVES ACROSS THE CITY AS WE SPEAK, LEAVING DEATH AND DESTRUCTION
"BUT, OF COURSE, YOU *ARE* BUSY WITH OTHER MATTERS."

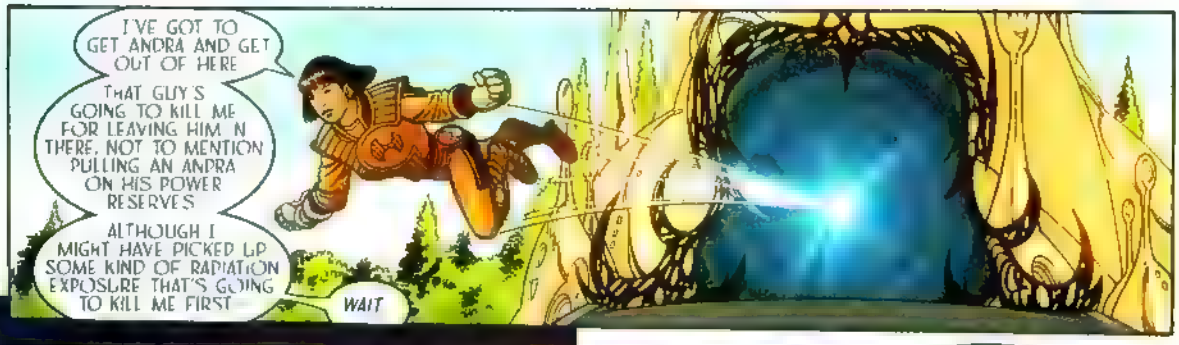
WHO IS SHE?
A FITTING CHALLENGE FOR YOU, PERHAPS? SHOULDN'T THE LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER PROVE HIS STRENGTH AGAINST THIS INVADER?
"YEAH, WY'TURE I GUESS I SHOULD"
YES, SEAHN, BECAUSE I'LL WATCH IT ALL THROUGH YOUR EYES
", AS THIS INTERLOPER RIDS ELYSIA OF ITS BIGGEST IMPERFECTION.
" YOU"
YOU'RE THE HOSTILE ONE
AND YOU'RE THE FRANTIC ONE
YOU'RE THE -
I'M SEAHN. HAVE WE MET?

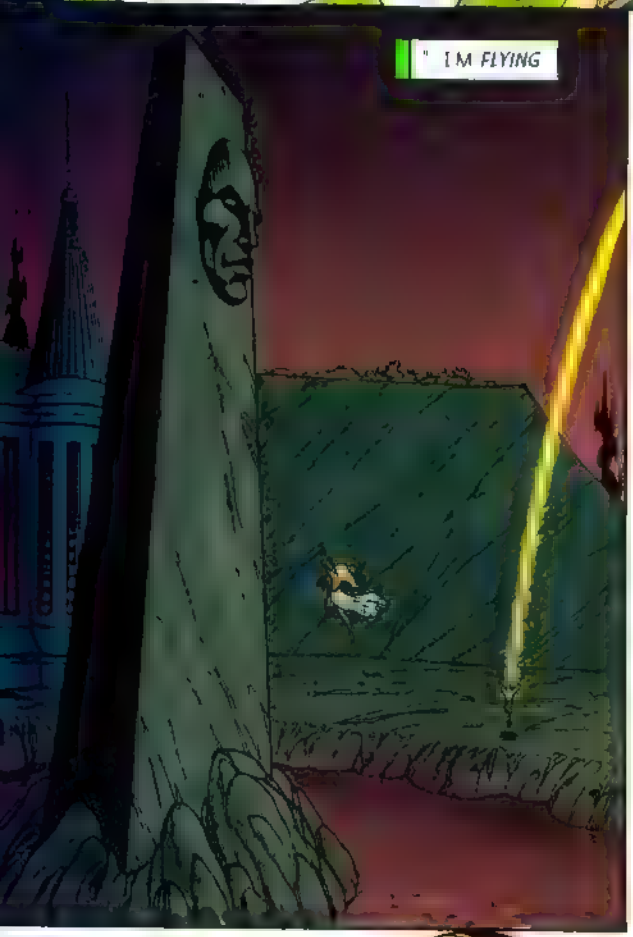

NO, BUT I CAN GUESS
AMBITION
UNFORTUNATELY YOU'RE IN THE WAY OF MINE
BYE, BYE

DOES SHE REALLY THINK I CAN BE TRAPPED IN THE VOID BETWEEN HOUSES?
WAAAAAL
AND WHO'S IN THE EIDOLON WITH ME?
DAMSEL IN DISTRESS, FROM THE SOUND
LET'S GO
AAAUGH!
SEE
UH?
GREETINGS, MORTAL
HAVE WE MET?

UH NO?
I'M SEAHN
HOUSE SINISTER
AND YOU?
JIM LINDY KARSTEN
HOUSE RADIANT, I GUESS
WELCOME TO THE EIDOLON, LINDY OF RADIANT
UM
UH-
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
FINE I'M FINE
TELL ME YOU'RE STANDING ON SOME THING
PLEASE?
WHAT !
WHAT?
YOU'RE STEALING MY STRENGTH!
STOP IT!
IT'S NOT ME! IT'S THE GAUNTLET!
WHOOOA!
GET OUT OF MY HEAD !
LEAVE ME ALONE!
THERE
WHEN I RECOVER

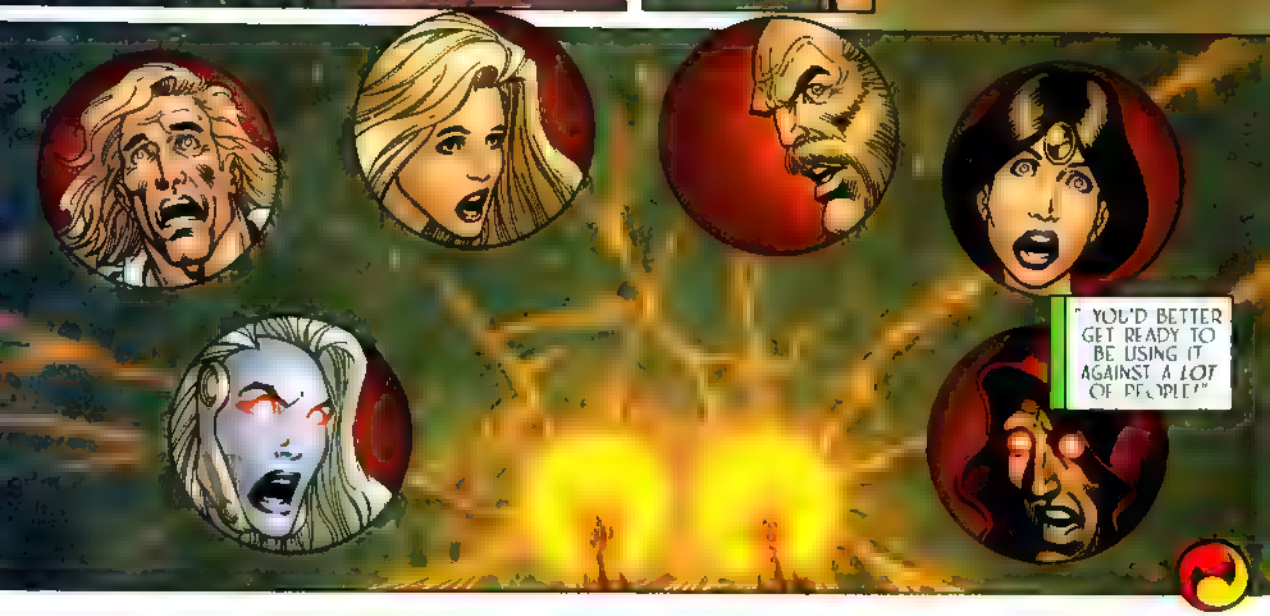
AND YOU'RE THE FORGETFUL ONE
YOU'RE ALL SO MUCH FUN!
DISPOSABLE REALLY
SO TRY TO REMEMBER NOT TO ATTACK ME AGAIN, BECAUSE I HAVE A MUCH BIGGER BATTLE COMING
AND YOU SHOULD BE MORE THAN CANNON FODDER
AND HERE'S MY GOAL--
HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT


I'VE GOT TO GET ANDRA AND GET OUT OF HERE
THAT GUY'S GOING TO KILL ME FOR LEAVING HIM IN THERE. NOT TO MENTION PULLING AN ANDRA ON HIS POWER RESERVES
ALTHOUGH I MIGHT HAVE PICKED UP SOME KIND OF RADIATION EXPOSURE THAT'S GOING TO KILL ME FIRST
WAIT


" I'M FLYING

"I'M BACK IN ACTION!"

ALTHOUGH MAYBE I'D BETTER KEEP THAT TO MYSELF. SEEING HOW ANDRA'S BEEN TREATING THE LOCAL COMPETITION
ANDRA--?
IF THAT THING'S ANOTHER WEAPON


" YOU'D BETTER GET READY TO BE USING IT AGAINST A LOT OF PEOPLE!"

STORYTELLERS

Barbara Kesel
WRITER

Andy Smith
PENCILER

Robin Riggs
Derek Fridolfs
Brad Vancata
Guest INKERS

Morry Hollowell
COLORIST

Dave Lanphear
LETTERER

The [illegible] Universe created by [illegible]

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Immortal godlings, they believe themselves to be the creators of the universe. In their minds, nothing came before them, and nothing equals them. They inhabit Elysia, the bright center of the universe from which they can visit the worlds below to inspire love, longing, and war.

Centuries ago, strife caused the bisection of their city into two parts: House Dexter, home to the selfless; and House Sinister, home to the selfish. The two sides rarely mix; transit to the other House causes a loss of power proportionate to the power held by each of the First. Grand battles have been put aside; political skirmishes, vying for the most attractive mates, and toying with the inhabitants of the many worlds below now occupy the First's days.

Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae. Seahn has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently:

Solusandra the Creator has come to Elysia, spreading mayhem in her wake. She reveals to the First that they were made to be her toys: first Alrwaal, then the others. She and her sidekick Lindy take the Gauntlet from Pyrem. Pyrem, distressed by the revelation that the First were playthings, is reminded by Enson that however created, they are real beings. Seahn is visited by the cadre of Sinister First Ingra sent to spy on Sigil-Bearers – now that she's gone, they are seeking his favor. Seahn kills Rhorf to show his contempt for their disloyalty before heading off to confront Solusandra, who tosses him into the Eidolon on her destructive path through the two Houses.

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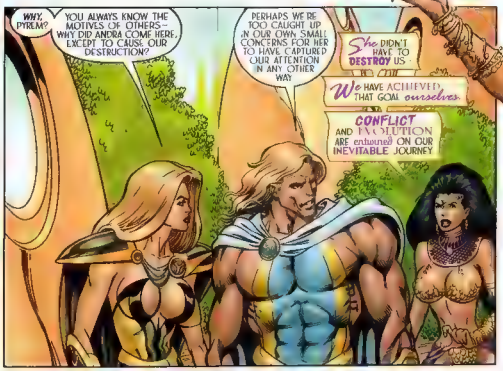
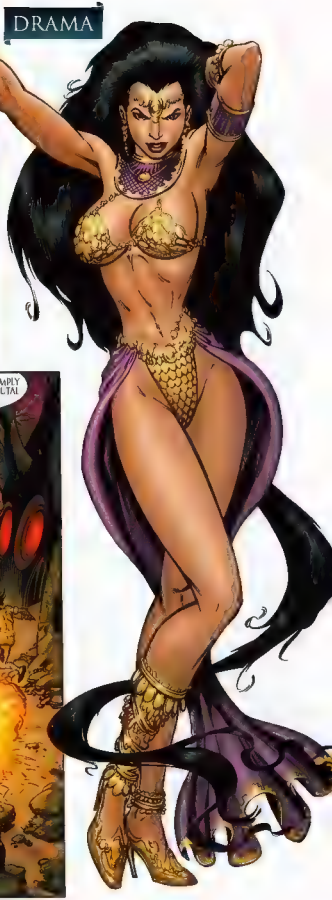
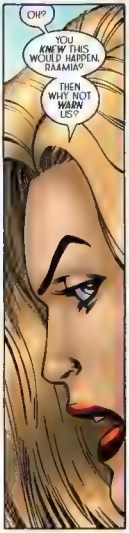
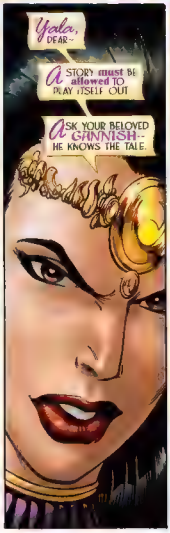
"ELYSIA HAS BEEN INVADED"
EMPATHY
I'VE FAILED
MY HOUSE WAS INVADED, AND ALL I DID WAS SHUNT THE TRAGEDY TO OUR SINISTER BROTHERS.
ALTWAAL'S OBELISK IS THREATENED IF IT FALLS BEFORE
PYREM!
FORGIVE THIS INTRUSION ON YOUR PAIN, BUT--
- WHERE HAS INGRA GONE? WAS SHE THE ONE BEHIND THIS EVENT?
SHE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN
SHE WAS HARBORING POWER FOR SOME PLOT, BUT THIS ISN'T PART OF HER PLANS
I WOULD HAVE KNOWN

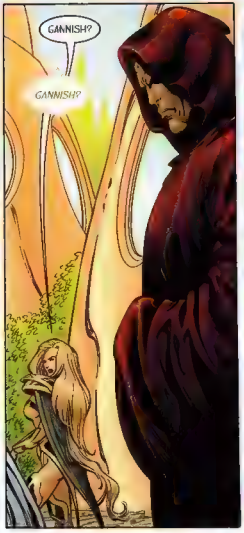
INGRA MUST HAVE HAD A HAND IN THIS. WHY ELSE WOULD OUR CREATOR RETURN TO DESTROY US?
YET OUR CREATOR IS LEAVING, WITH ELYSIA STILL SOMEWHAT INTACT

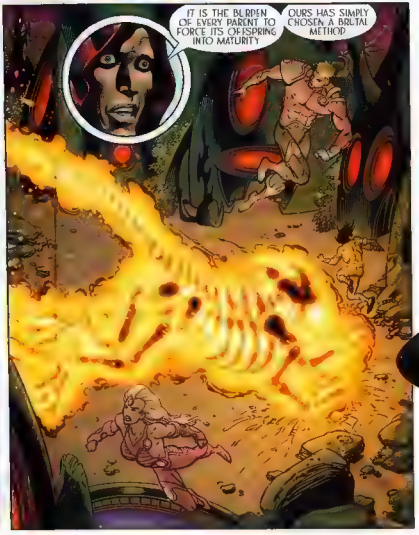

WHY, PYREM?
YOU ALWAYS KNOW THE MOTIVES OF OTHERS--WHY DID ANDRA COME HERE, EXCEPT TO CAUSE OUR DESTRUCTION?
PERHAPS WE'RE TOO CAUGHT UP IN OUR OWN SMALL CONCERNS FOR HER TO HAVE CAPTURED OUR ATTENTION IN ANY OTHER WAY
She DIDN'T HAVE TO DESTROY US
We HAVE ACHIEVED THAT GOAL ourselves
CONFLICT AND EVOLUTION ARE ensnared ON OUR INEVITABLE JOURNEY


DRAMA

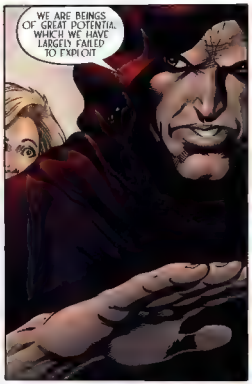

OH?
YOU KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN, RAAMIA?
THEN WHY NOT WARN US?


Yala, DEAR~
A STORY must BE allowed TO PLAY ITSELF OUT
ASK YOUR BELOVED GANNISH~ HE KNOWS THE TALE.

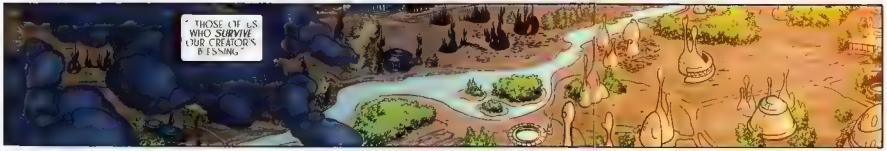

GANNISH?
GANNISH?


IT IS THE BURDEN OF EVERY PARENT TO FORCE ITS OFFSPRING INTO MATURITY
OURS HAS SIMPLY CHOSEN A BRUTAL METHOD

IT IS THE TRUTH I SAW BUT DARED NOT VOICE—
CREATED AS AMUSEMENTS, WE WERE ABANDONED WITH THE MYSTERY OF OUR OWN GENESIS UNSOLVED SO THAT WE MIGHT EVOLVE BEYOND THE SINGLE ATTRIBUTE AT OUR CORES
WE HAVE NOT, YALA


WE ARE BEINGS OF GREAT POTENTIAL, WHICH WE HAVE LARGELY FAILED TO EXPLOIT

WE ARE GODS, GANNISH! WE CREATE LIFE! WE—
WE ARE CHILDREN, NO BETTER THAN OUR CREATOR!
SHE HAS GRANTED US THE CONFLICT THAT WILL BE THE MEANS OF OUR MATURATION BECAUSE THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO GROW UP—


"THOSE OF US WHO SURVIVE OUR CREATOR'S BLESSING"

IS
S I OVER?
S SHE GONE?

YES
BUT THAT'S NOT
NOOO—!

ANGUISH

DO THESE DEATHS SERVE OUR PURPOSE?
ENSON THIS BEAST-
IT'S PART OF US-- IT SHOULD OBEY MY COMMAND TO STOP!
WE ARE DIFFERENT WHEN APART WYTURI
THIS MONSTER WAS CREATED BY ANOTHER ASPECT
BY US BUT NOT BY US
EVEN SO
-IN WHATEVER FORM, I REFUSE TO BE MENACED BY A CREATURE OF MY OWN MAKING!
THERE! AT THE VERY LEAST, I'VE SENT IT WHERE IT WILL BE WELCOMED!
DANIK

LOOK!
AN INVADER IN HOUSE DEXTER--
A CHALLENGE WORTHY OF OUR MIGHT!
LET US NOW JOIN IN GLORIOUS BATTLE--
FOR DEXTER!
FOR YALA!
FOR ELYSIA!

JOY

HMMM.
WHILE I UNDERSTAND THE CREATURE'S SOURCE
I DON'T LIKE THE MEANING
YES--
--THE ORANGE-EYED WOMAN, THIS BEAST-- WHAT IS THEIR CONNECTION?
THE PLAN IS BEING CORRUPTED BY THESE ANOMALIES
THEN WE MUST GATHER THE SCATTERED PIECES OF OURSELVES
COME, WYTURE-- LET US INITIATE THE JOINING FOR A FINAL TIME
AND WHAT WILL BECOME OF OUR CHARGES HERE?
WE'VE DONE ALL WE CAN IN THESE FORMS TO SET THEM ON THE PATH TO GREATER STRENGTH -
"--THEIR SURVIVAL IS NOW THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITY"

DANIK

THEY'LL BE SLAUGHTERED!
NO, SCHULLIAN
YOU CAN'T HELP THEM
BUT TRENIN THEY'LL DIE
THEY MAY, AND WE MUST ALLOW IT
IF WE REVEAL OURSELVES NOW, WE LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK SEAIN IN A VULNERABLE MOMENT
ONE WITH A SPIRIT THAT TAINTED COULD NEVER BE MORE THAN A TYRANT
IF HE IS ALLOWED TO REIGN UNOPPOSED, MORE FIRST WILL DIE THAN AT THE HANDS OF THAT BEAST
"ONLY IF WE PASS BY THIS HORROR CAN WE AVERT THE GREATER EVIL.
SO PUT ASIDE YOUR PAIN AND TOSS YOUR POWER TO THE OTHER SIDE--
"...WHERE WE CAN RECLAIM IT TO USE AGAINST THE TRAITOR."

DETERMINATION

BY HIS EYES— THANK ALTWAAL IT'S LEAVING!
YAAAH!
WHO—?
PYREM!
FORGIVE ME FOR INTRUDING ON YOUR PRIVACY, THROE—
—AND FOR STARTLING YOU.
WHAT HORROR IS THAT?
BUT I MUST TROUBLE YOU FURTHER.
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE AVAILABLE TO RECORD AND TRANSMIT THE MESSAGE OF MY ABDICATION.
ABDICATION?
YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO ABANDON YOUR DUTY TO... PYREM!
ESPECIALLY NOW!
OR IS THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING OUR LEADER ONLY A RESPONSIBILITY IN TIMES OF EASE?
THIS IS TOO CRUEL PYREM—
—DON'T MAKE ME SEND THIS MESSAGE
THROE ELYSIA HAS BEEN DESTROYED WHILE IN MY CARE—AND—
I'VE BEEN DISTRACTED
INEFFECTIVE
CALL THEM
HAVE THE COUNCIL CONVENE TO NAME MY SUCCESSOR
PYREM NO!
CALL THEM. THROE I'M NO LONGER FIT TO LEAD US
MISERY

BECAUSE I AM BETRAYING THEM BY NOT REVEALING MY LOVE'S OWN INTRIGUE
HE WHO IS KING AMONG YOU SERVES ME!
HE AND I HAVE GIFTED YOU ALL WITH A MEASURE OF OUR POWER!
YOU ARE A MIGHTY LEGION, INVADERS OF WORLDS!
WE STRIKE NOW, WHILE THE TWO HOUSES ARE AT THEIR MOST VULNERABLE!
FOLLOW ME UP TO HEAVEN AND GLORY!
COME! FIGHT!
AND ELYSIA WILL BE OURS!
ANGER

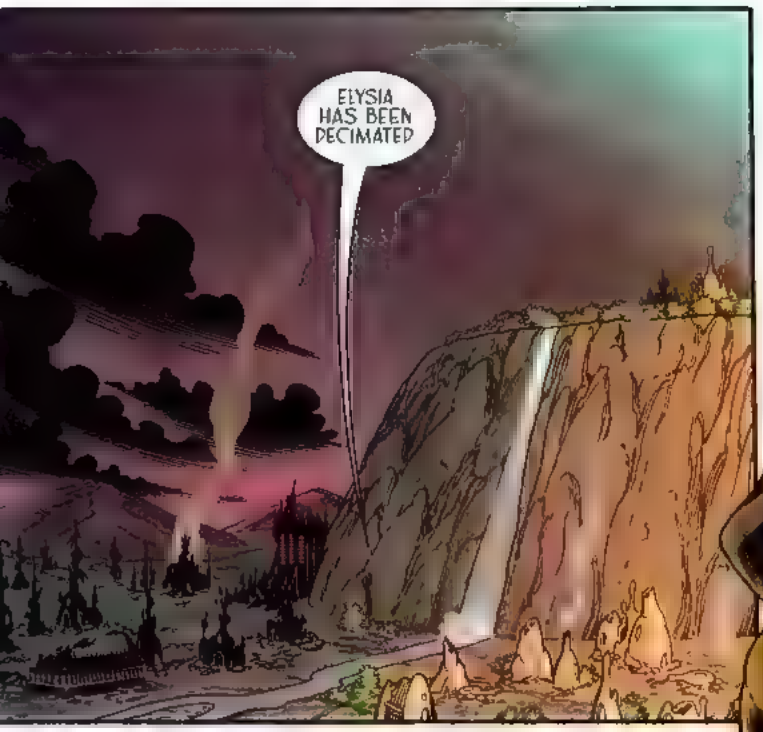
GREAT
JUST ME, TOSS ME ASIDE
YOU'LL GET YOURS
BOTH OF YOU
WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE, I'LL
GNNNGH!
NOW THAT'S MORE LIKE IT
I KNEW YOU COULDN'T FORGET ME

DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE NOT GOING TO FEEL THE PAIN THOUGH, WHEN I...
HEY!

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
WHAT GOOD IS LEADING SINISTER IF IT'S A WRECK?
SOMEBODY'S GOING TO PAY FOR THIS

AMBITION

PYREM!
PYREM?
FATHER ?
MOTHER ?
PERCEPTION
HAVE YOU BOTH ABANDONED ELYSIA?
I'M AFRAID TO LOOK
I'M AFRAID IT'S SO
YOUR EYES SHOW ME A VASTLY DIFFERENT WORLD
BUT F- YOU'RE GONE
WHO'S PROTECTING ELYSIA?
DOES THIS MEAN THERE'S NO ONE TO KEEP SLANN IN CHECK
EXCEPT ME?

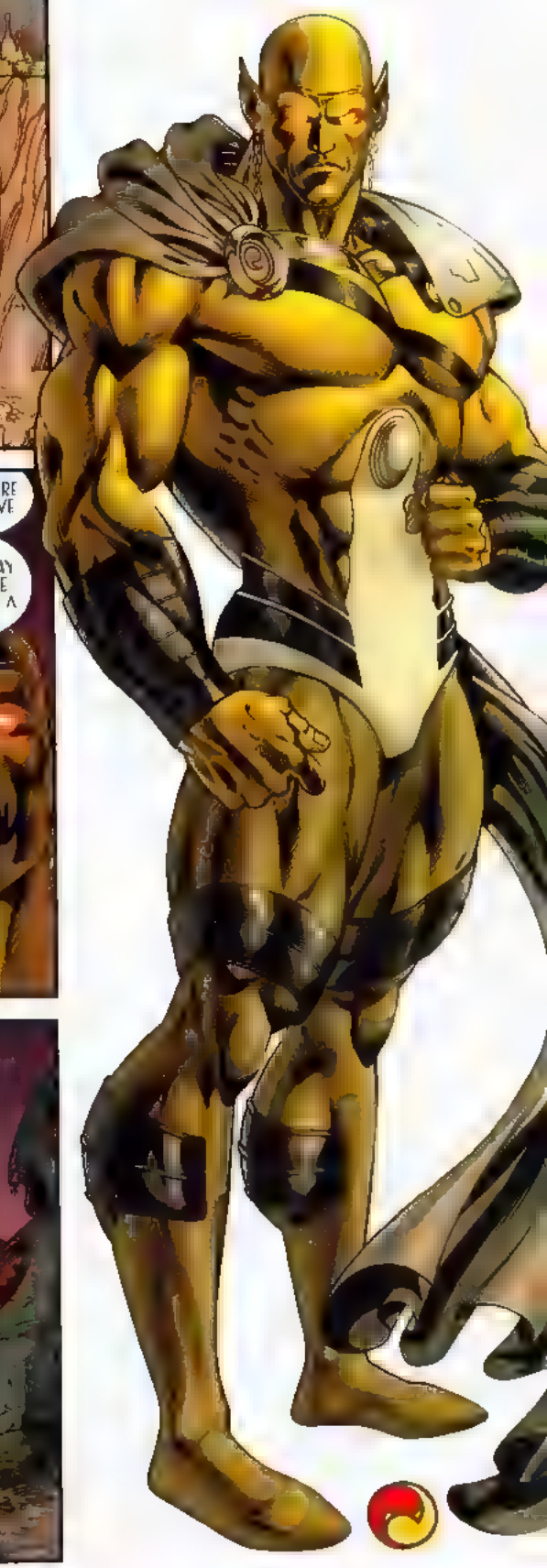

ELYSIA HAS BEEN DECIMATED

ALTWAAL'S OBELISK STILL STANDS
BUT SO MANY OF US DO NOT

WE IT SEEMS, WERE CRAFTED TO SERVE CONFLICT
WE MAY BE DOOMED TO PLAY AT WAR FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF A GREATER GOD

BUT EVERY MATCH HAS ITS RITUALS OF ENDGAME
THE TRICK WILL BE TO FIND A WAY AROUND THE RULES

INTELLECT



STORYTELLERS

Barbara Kesel
WRITER

Andy Smith
PENCILER

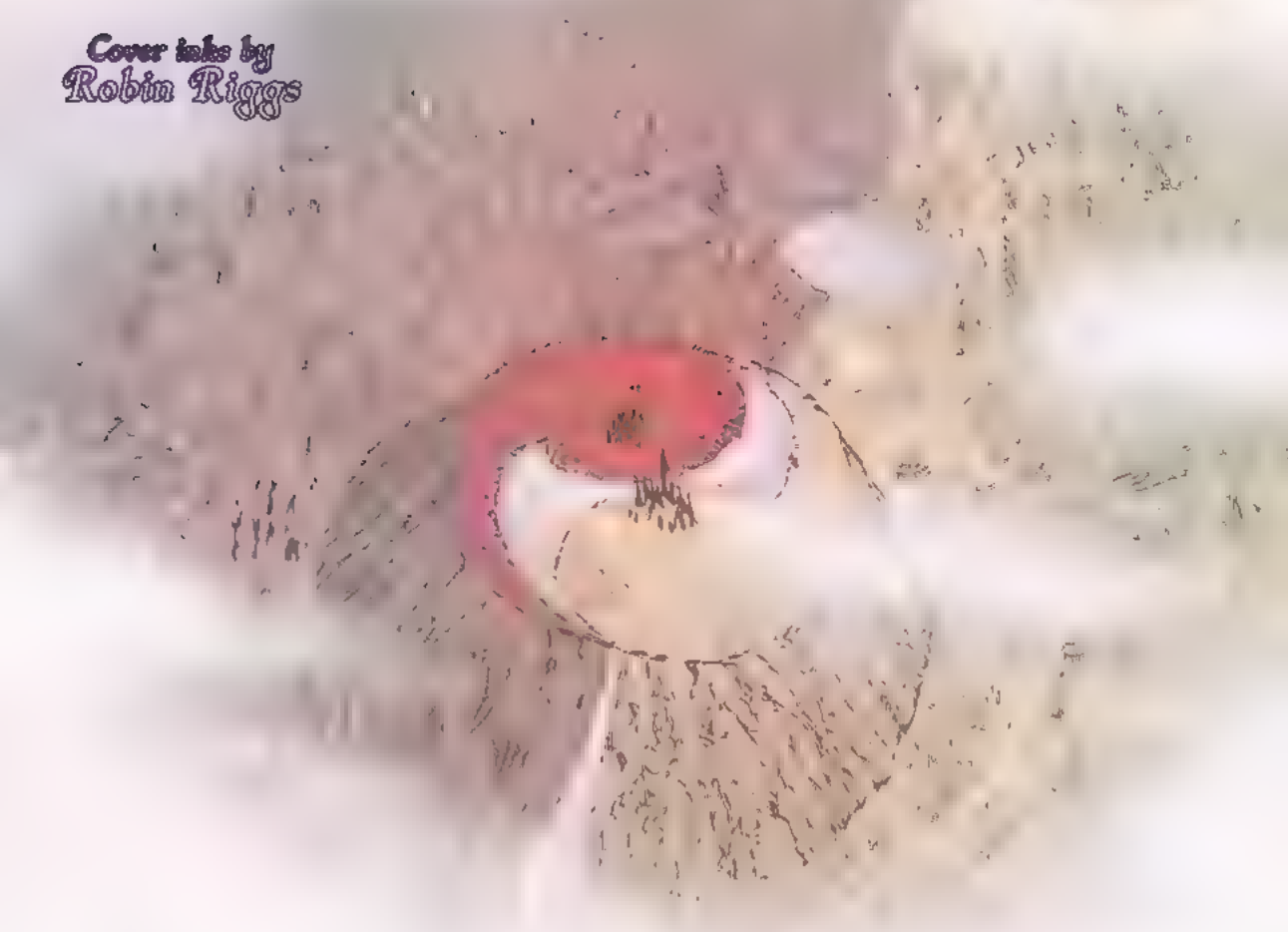
James Hodgkins & Matt Ryan
Guest INKERS

Morry Hollowell
COLORIST

Dave Lanphear
LETTERER

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

Cover inks by Robin Riggs



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Barbara Kesel
Marat Mychaels
Armando Durruthy
Caesar Rodriguez

They are the First

Immortal godlings, they believe themselves to be the creators of the universe. In their minds, nothing came before them, and nothing equals them. They inhabit Elysia, the bright center of the universe from which they can visit the worlds below to inspire love, longing, and war.

Centuries ago, strife caused the bisection of their city into two parts: House Dexter, home to the selfless; and House Sinister, home to the selfish. The two sides rarely mix; transit to the other House causes a loss of power proportionate to the power held by each of the First. Grand battles have been put aside; political skirmishes, vying for the most attractive mates, and toying with the inhabitants of the many worlds below now occupy the First's days.

Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae. Seahn has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently:

Solusandra has invaded Elysia, leaving a trail of destruction and death, but the greatest damage is done through her revelation that the First were simply her toys, created and abandoned centuries before. Danik's Hound, which pursues Solusandra, adds to the damage. Wyture and Enson, both avatars of Danik, are disturbed by their inability to control this creature. They depart to rejoin their prime avatar. When all the invaders have gone, the damage they leave behind profoundly affects the First: Pyrem abdicates his role as Leader, Ingra conspires with a Sigil-Bearer, Trenin hunts Seahn, and Persha wonders who will protect Elysia.

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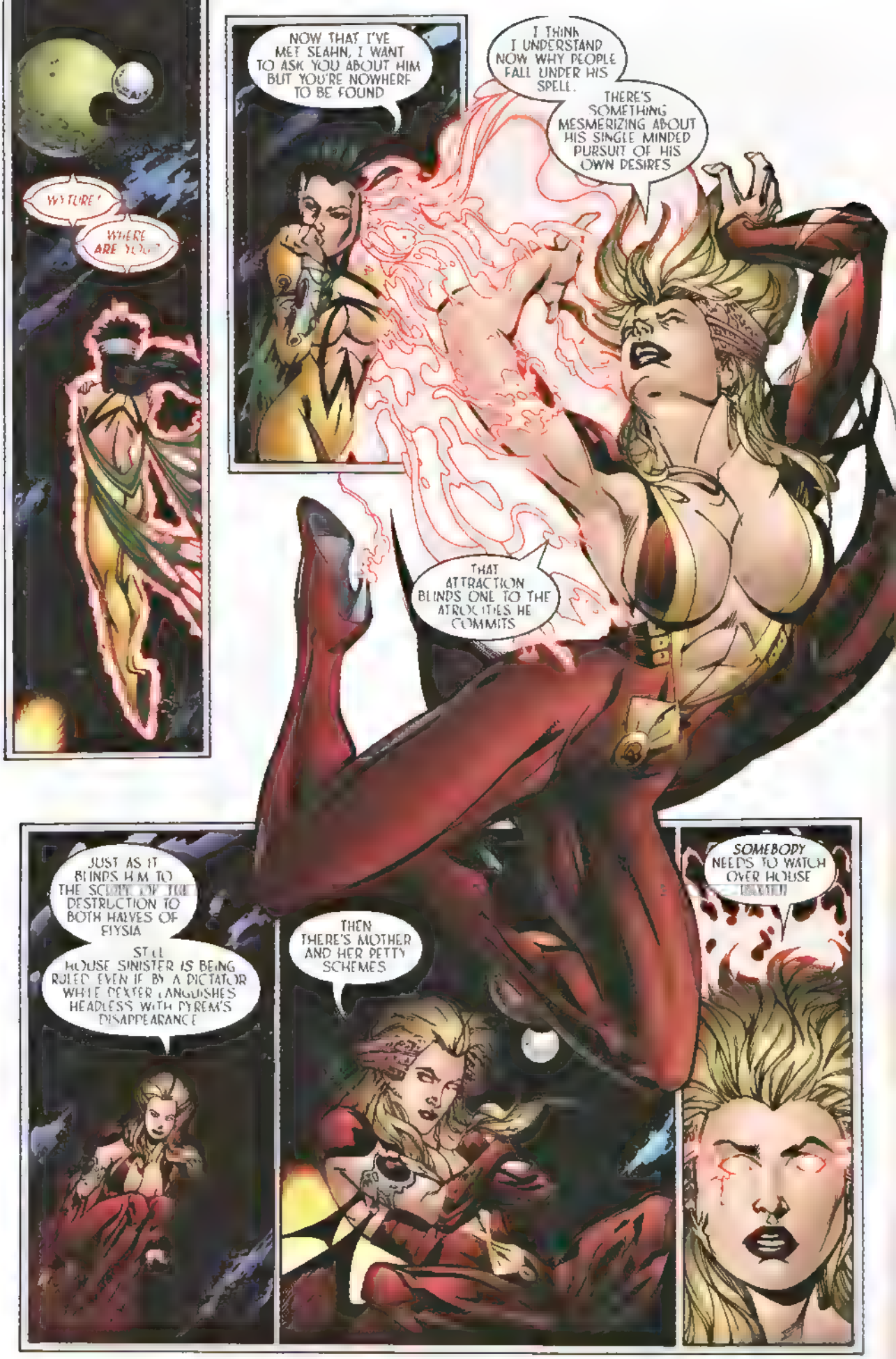
DON'T WHINE TO ME ABOUT *SUFFERING* -
WE'VE *ALL* SUFFERED
BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO WALLOW IN OUR WOUNDS!
THE TRAUMA HOUSE SINISTER HAS KNOWN TODAY WILL BE AVENGED!
I'LL SEE TO THAT
NOW IS THE TIME WHEN I *EXPECT* YOU TO STAND BY YOUR HOUSE DURING ITS REPAIR AND RECONSTRUCTION -

INSTEAD, VHYLE I FIND YOU TRYING TO RUN AWAY!
NOT GOOD
AS THE LEADER OF HOUSE SINISTER, YOU CAN SEE WHY I HAVE TO TAKE MATTERS INTO MY OWN HANDS BEFORE WE HAVE NOTHING BUT CHAOS AROUND HERE!
EVERYBODY PAYING ATTENTION?
GOOD

BECAUSE ANYBODY ELSE READY TO RUN AWAY MIGHT WANT TO GIVE THAT IDEA A SECOND THINK
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ALL HAVING A NUCLEAR BREAKDOWN OVER A FEW LITTLE WORDS!
SO THIS SOLUSANDRA CLAIMS SHE CREATED THE FIRST
YOU'RE JUST GOING TO GO BELLY UP BECAUSE SHE SAYS SHE MADE US?
NO MADE YOU
THE FIRST BEGAT THE SECUNDAE, WE KNOW THAT
SO?
SO WHAT
WE ARE WHAT WE ARE, UNLESS WE GIVE UP
THEN WE'RE NOTHING
GET OVER IT BECAUSE WE'RE BETTER THAN THAT
HI, THERE
I'M CERTAINLY GLAD YOU DIDN'T RUN OFF TO ANOTHER WORLD WITHOUT GIVING ME THE CHANCE TO SAY HELLO
GREETINGS, SEAHN
YOU KNOW ME. I'M SORRY I DON'T KNOW YOUR NAME
WE HAVEN'T MET
I, I WAS JUST SEEKING WYTURE SHE'S BEEN AT YOUR SIDE SO MUCH LATELY I ASSUMED I'D FIND HER HERE
NAH
SHE TOOK OFF ON ME

HMMMM I SUPPOSE SHE REACTED LIKE THAT ONE?
WHAT ONE?
WYGHEE T?
NNOOO!
I WILL NOT ACCEPT THIS!
I WILL NOT LIVE AS SOMEONE'S TOY!
I AM A GOD-

A GOD!
--AND I WILL GO SOMEWHERE WHERE I CAN LIVE LIKE ONE!
YOU KNEW HE'D DO THAT--CAN YOU SEE THE FUTURE, OR ARE YOU JUST ASTONISHINGLY PERCEPTIVE?
I'M OBSERVANT HE'S NOT THE FIRST ONE TO ABANDON ELYSIA. IT'S BEEN HAPPENING ALL OVER--
SO MANY OF US WOULD RATHER RULE THE LESSER WORLDS THAN ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT IS HAPPENING
LOOK--THERE'S ANOTHER
I CAN'T BELIEVE EVERYBODY'S FREAKING OVER THIS!
IF THIS STUPIDITY KEEPS UP THERE'S NO POINT IN MY HAVING BECOME LEADER HERE
TRUE
BECAUSE THERE'LL BE NO ONE LEFT TO FOLLOW
HEY WHERE'D YOU GO?


WYTURE!
WHERE ARE YOU?
NOW THAT I'VE MET SEAHN, I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT HIM BUT YOU'RE NOWHERE TO BE FOUND
I THINK I UNDERSTAND NOW WHY PEOPLE FALL UNDER HIS SPELL.
THERE'S SOMETHING MESMERIZING ABOUT HIS SINGLE MINDED PURSUIT OF HIS OWN DESIRES
THAT ATTRACTION BLINDS ONE TO THE ATROCITIES HE COMMITS
JUST AS IT BLINDS HIM TO THE SCOPE OF THE DESTRUCTION TO BOTH HALVES OF ELYSIA
STILL HOUSE SINISTER IS BEING RULED EVEN IF BY A DICTATOR WHILE DEXTER LANGUISHES HEADLESS WITH PYREM'S DISAPPEARANCE
THEN THERE'S MOTHER AND HER PETTY SCHEMES
SOMEBODY NEEDS TO WATCH OVER HOUSE

THEN WHO *SHOULD* LEAD US?
DEXTER'S FIRST LEADER WAS CHOSEN BY CONSENSUS. THE COUNCIL WAS CHOSEN FROM THE BRIGHTEST HEARTS
ANY ONE OF YOU COULD SERVE AS LEADER
ANY ONE OF US, THREE?
ANYONE AT ALL

NO, NOT ANYONE!
IF PYREM HAS LEFT US THEN THE OLDEST SHOULD SERVE!
TRENIN IS THE ONLY CHOICE!
TRENIN, HOWEVER IS NOT HERE
YALA, WE NEED A LEADER NOW
I KNOW WHERE TRENIN'S GONE
I CAN SEE HIM
FOLLOW MY LEAD!

TOSS YOUR WEAPON TO THE FAR SIDE
THEN RECLAIM IT, THUS RESTORING YOUR MIGHT!
WHICH PUTS US ON THE SINISTER SIDE
WITH POWER INTACT
WE MUST STRIKE SWIFTLY, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION
TO KILL SEAHN AND SET THE COURSE OF THE TWO HOUSES TO RIGHTS!

"LET NOTHING AND NO ONE STAND IN YOUR WAY

"IF THERE IS TO BE ANY HOPE OF A FUTURE FOR HOUSE DEXTER AND ELYSIA

"THIS PRETENDER TO SINISTER'S RULE MUST BE DESTROYED!"

HALT! WE'RE HERE

SEAHN!

HE'S NOT HERE?

YES, HE IS
SO MUCH FOR THE GREAT HUNTER
YOU CAN'T SPOT ME AS EASILY NOW-- I NO LONGER CARRY THE STINK OF HOUSE DEXTER
COME FIGHT ME IF YOU DARE, TRENIN
BUT I WON'T SEND ALL OF YOU HOME *THIS* TIME...
JUST YOUR *HEAD*
STAY BACK! THIS IS BETWEEN MY FOSTERLING AND ME

LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT, OLD MAN!
ANOTHER CHANCE TO CUT YOU DOWN, WHELP!
SHOULD WE ALLOW THIS?
WE HAVE NO CHOICE

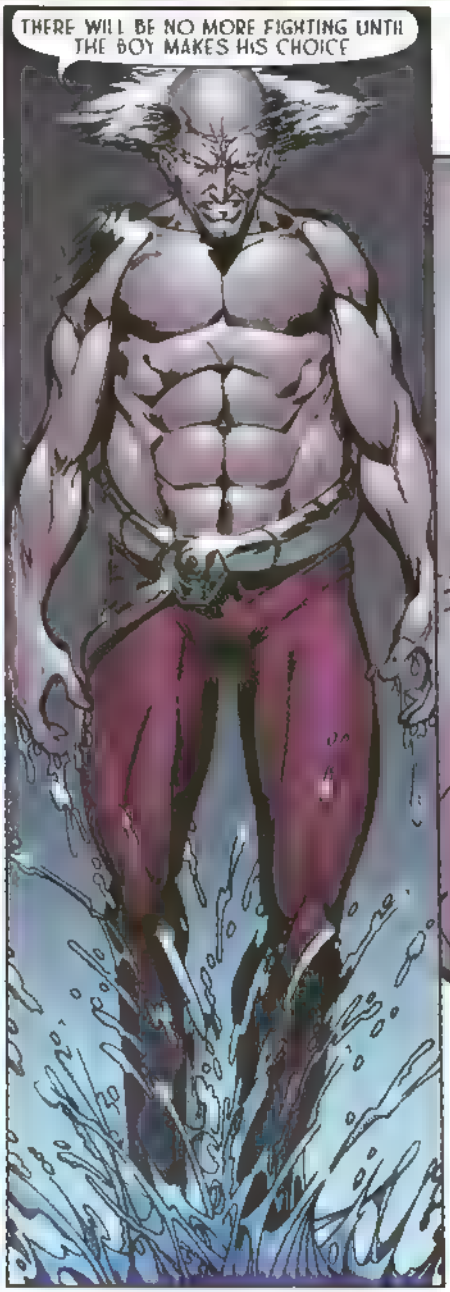
THEY'RE BOTH MORE POWERFUL THAN ALL THE REST OF US!"

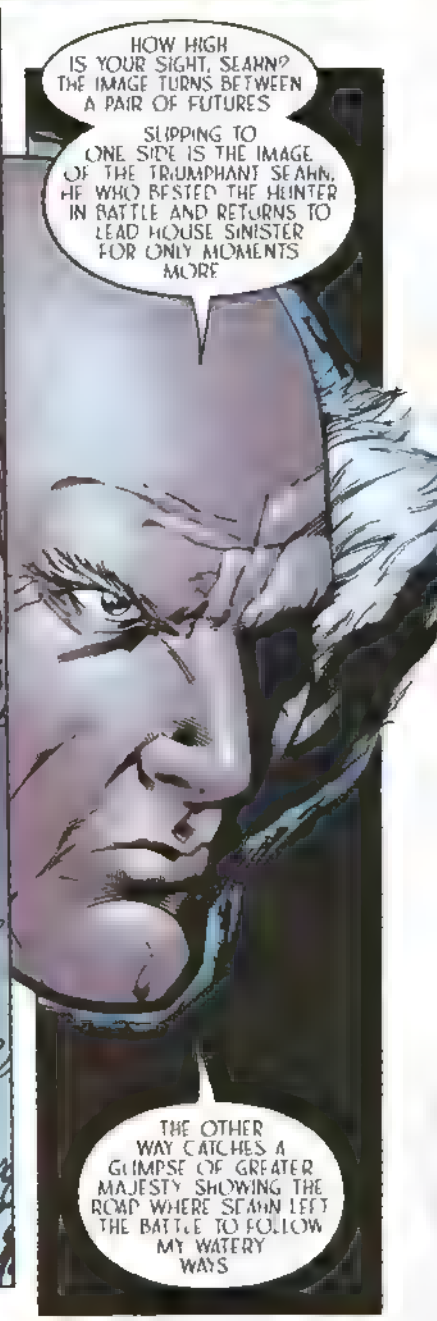
NYRGGH
UNNGH
IF I HADN'T TAKEN SUCH A BEATING FROM THAT ORANGE EYED WITCH AND HER SNEAKY SIDEKICK YOU'D BE DEAD NOW!
GOOD--THAT MEANS THEIR DESTRUCTIVE INVASION OF ELYSIA HAS NETTED ONE POSITIVE EFFECT!
I'LL TRY FOR A SECOND!
AND TO THINK I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY FATHER!
IF THAT WERE TRUE

I'D STILL BE THE INSTRUMENT OF YOUR DEATH!
MORE FATHER THAN THE MAN WHO SIRED HIM. YET YOU LOVE THE BOY HE WAS TRENIN
WILL THAT SPUR YOU TO KILL HIM OR STAY YOUR HAND?
OR MUST I TIP MY OWN TO SAVE THE CHILD?
HE IS ONE OF TWO KEYS, REMEMBER
EITHER WILL UNLOCK MY MADNESS, SO I CAN LET NEITHER DIE

WHA -?
ORIUM

LET MY WAVES BREAK THE TIDE OF THIS BATTLE


THERE WILL BE NO MORE FIGHTING UNTIL THE BOY MAKES HIS CHOICE


HOW HIGH IS YOUR SIGHT, SEAHN? THE IMAGE TURNS BETWEEN A PAIR OF FUTURES
SLIPPING TO ONE SIDE IS THE IMAGE OF THE TRIUMPHANT SEAHN, HE WHO BESTED THE HEINTER IN BATTLE AND RETURNS TO LEAD HOUSE SINISTER FOR ONLY MOMENTS MORE
THE OTHER WAY CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF GREATER MAJESTY SHOWING THE ROAD WHERE SEAHN LEFT THE BATTLE TO FOLLOW MY WATERY WAYS

A DECISION WHICH DELIVERS HIM ELYSIA ENTIRE
WHICH WILL IT BE, SEAHN?
INDULGE OR IGNORE?
YOU CAN'T DO THIS, ORIUM! YOU CAN'T SIDE WITH SEAHN! REMEMBER THE PACT OF THE SIX!
BROKEN CENTURIES BEFORE BY PYREM'S ACT OF LOVE, AND NO LONGER RELEVANT
POOR TRENIN
LOCKED IN ETERNAL PURSUIT, WITH SATISFACTION DENIED
YOU WISH A FINAL TROPHY AND THUS PURSUE THE BOY, BUT THE HUNTER'S GUILT CANNOT BE ASSUAGED THIS WAY
WE CAN NONE OF US ESCAPE THE TRAIL OF OUR TALE'S TELLING
OURS RACES TO A CLOSE AND I WISH TO MEET IT WITH LUCID AWARENESS
YEAH YEAH, TRENIN CAN'T CATCH ME AND YOU'RE NOT MAKING MUCH SENSE, AS USUAL.
SO TELL ME ABOUT THIS PLAN OF YOURS
WHILE YOU TWO CLASH LIKE RAMS

" DEXTER'S COUNCIL CONVENES TO APPOINT A NEW LEADER."
HOW LONG WILL WE DEBATE THIS?
YES, THE ONE CHOSEN NEED NOT BE OF THE COUNCIL, BUT
THERE IS A WAY TO CHOOSE THAT YOU HAVEN'T CONSIDERED
THE CONSENSUS OF LINKED MINDS IF YOU WILL OPEN YOURSELVES TO CONNECTION--
THE DEBATE WILL BE UNNECESSARY

"ALL DEXTER MINDS THEN CONVERGE ON THE MENTAL PLANE
"CHOOSE WISELY, MAKING YOUR SELECTIONS FROM THE MELDING OF INTUITION AND INTELLECT
"EACH OF YOU KNOWS WHAT IS NEEDED IN DEXTER'S LEADER
"WITHIN EACH OF YOU LIES THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE BEST CHOICE"
SO, THINK OF THE ONE YOU THEN RECOGNIZE AS THE IDEAL TO UNIFY US AND ANSWER WITH ME THE QUESTION
--WHO SHOULD LEAD US?

WHO?
HER?
SEE?
NO!
SURPRISING
WHY?
"PERSHA?"
I ACCEPT

STORYTELLERS

Barbara Kesel
WRITER

Marat Michaels
Guest PENCILER

Armando Durruthy
Guest INKER

Caesar Rodriguez
Guest COLORIST

Dave Lanphear
LETTERER

Cover pencils by
Ron Wagner

Cover colors by
Christina Strain

The CrossGen Universe created by Mark Alessi & Gina M. Villa

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CrossGen

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THE FIRST®

Barbara Kesel
Andy Smith
Tom Simmons
Morry Hollowell
Wil Quintana

0 00155 98134 2 03711

USA $2.95

crossgen.com

They are the First

Immortal godlings, they believe themselves to be the creators of the universe. In their minds, nothing came before them, and nothing equals them. They inhabit Elysia, the bright center of the universe from which they can visit the worlds below to inspire love, longing, and war.

Centuries ago, strife caused the bisection of their city into two parts: House Dexter, home to the selfless; and House Sinister, home to the selfish. The two sides rarely mix; transit to the other House causes a loss of power proportionate to the power held by each of the First. Grand battles have been put aside; political skirmishes, vying for the most attractive mates, and toying with the inhabitants of the many worlds below now occupy the First's days.

Then came the Sigil-Bearers. The anomaly of beings wielding power not granted to them by one of the First leads to a disruption of the centuries-long ennui. The horror of the discovery that the Sigil-Bearers can steal power from the First catalyzes changes prophesied centuries before. Two children are at the flash point of chaos and change: **Persha** and **Seahn** are the new blood, Secundae, second-born children of the originally-created First. One of the two will be the Leader to guide the united First through a chaotic future. Persha is the all-perceptive watcher able to see and sense through others' eyes and Seahn the ambitious rebel inciting the Secundae. Seahn has now taken over House Sinister. Persha knows that the First must come together as one again and seeks the original Leader; Seahn knows only that someone needs to take charge, making him an ideal choice.

Their efforts will indeed change Elysia, but not in the way they intend.

Currently:

A disguised Persha finally meets Seahn, who has no idea of the mystery woman's true identity. Elysia lies in ruins, and frightened First are disappearing to lesser worlds where they can still maintain the illusion of godhood shattered by Solusandra's visit. Trenin catches up with Seahn, their battle interrupted by Orium's prophesy — Seahn must choose to abandon the fight to achieve greatness. The Dexter council convenes to select a new Leader through psychic consensus, and the answer returns: Persha, daughter of their abdicated Leader and his greatest love and nemesis. She accepts, changing her allegiance to House Dexter.

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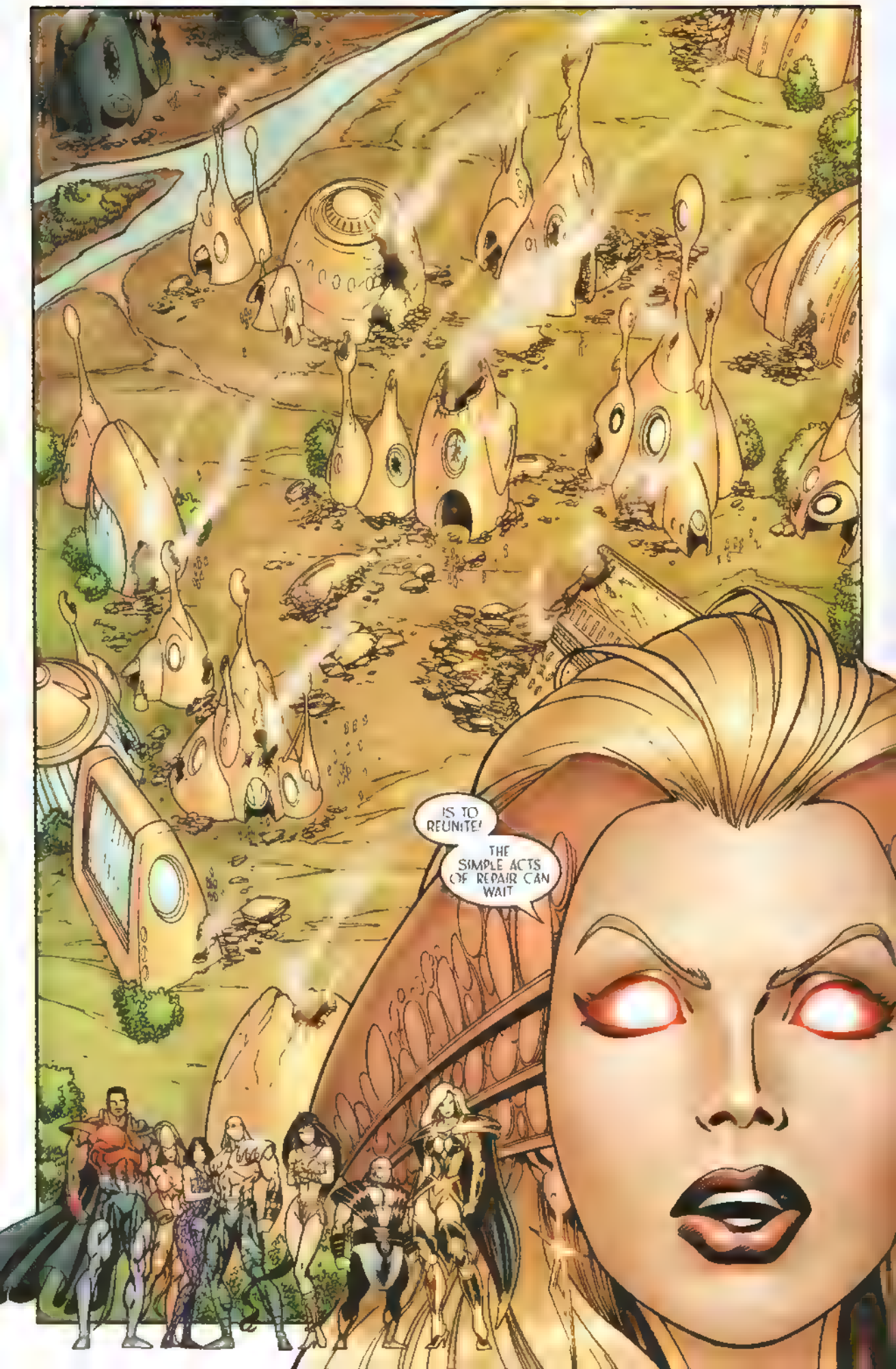
THIS ISN'T HOW I HAD HOPED TO ACHIEVE UNITY BETWEEN THE TWO HOUSES..
I'M SO SORRY
THIS IS HARDLY WHAT ANY OF US HAD HOPED WOULD HAPPEN, PERSHA
DON'T FEEL THAT YOUR FIRST ACT AS OUR NEW LEADER MUST BE TO SET IT ALL RIGHT
I SAID I WAS SORRY ORDIAL - NOT RESPONSIBLE
DEAD
SO MANY OF US DEAD AT THE BEAST'S HANDS
HOW COULD OUR SELF PROCLAIMED CREATOR BE SO CRUEL?
NATURE IS HARSH PAIN IS A REALITY WE HAVE PROTECTED OURSELVES FROM BY HIDING HERE IN OUR PERFECT PLAYGROUND
WE NEED TO EXPAND OUR VISION BEYOND ELYSIA, BUT OUR FIRST STEP MUST BE TO REBUILD
NO, REASH OUR FIRST STEP--


IS TO REUNITE!
THE SIMPLE ACTS OF REPAIR CAN WAIT

NO YOU SHUT UP ABOUT DEXTER!
FIRST STEP HERE'S FOR ME AND TRENIN TO FINISH THIS!
THEN I'LL SIT AND LISTEN TO YOUR STUPID PLANS, ORIUM, BUT TRENIN'S CALLED ME OUT AND WE NEED TO SETTLE THIS AGE OLD ISSUE!
HIS AGE HIS OLD
I CAN'T GET OLD UNTIL THE CONTROLS ARE REMOVED CAN I?
THINK I'LL GO EASY ON YOU FOR ALL THE GOOD TIMES, DADDY?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT YOU'RE NOT
GUESS YOU'LL HAVE NO PROBLEM SLICING AWAY AT ME, THEN
SEAHN
GNYYAH!
SHUT UP

OUR FIRST STEP HAS BEEN TAKEN.
IT IS THE LAST ONE THAT WILL DETERMINE THE OUTCOME.
GO AHEAD! TRY ME!
SWWWSHT
BY HIS EYES!
SURPRISE LOOK AT THAT -
YOU WAITED TOO LONG. I GREW UP, INTO MY FANCY BIRTHRIGHT FROM ALTWAAL
I DON'T THINK I AM SOMETHING YOU CAN KILL ANYMORE TRENIN
SEAHN SHOULD BE INSIDE THAT ABOMINATION HE'S MADE OF MY HOME

THE FIRST THING WE DO IS NEUTRALIZE THAT THANKLESS MONSTER
WITH ELYSIA IN CRISIS, IT'LL BE A SIMPLE THING TO REESTABLISH DOMINANCE IN THIS HOUSE. THEN INVADE HOUSE DEXTER
AFTER PUNISHING SEAHN FOR THE WRECK HE'S MADE OF MY LOVELY CITY
IT'LL BE A PLEASURE TO RETURN THE FAVOR OF D'SPOSING THE LEADER
READY?
THEN--
ATTACK!
DO I LET YOU SUCCEED, MY LOVE?
SEAHN'S AMBITION OR YOUR OWN-- WHICH IS THE GREATER DANGER?

SEAHN!

WHAT NOW?

INGRA?

YOU PICKED A BAD DAY TO TRY TO COME HOME INGRA

AND WHAT'S WITH THIS SORRY PACK OF JACKALS?

QUICKLY GET SEAHN WHILE INGRA'S FORCES HAVE HIS ATTENTION!

PLEASE TREAT ME YOU DON'T I WI

I HAVE COME TO RECLAIM MY HOUSE, SEAHN!
OH YEAH?
YOU AND WHAT ARMY?
I WILL NOT BE SPOKEN TO THAT WAY BY THE MISBEGOTTEN BY-FLOW OF FUTILE INFATUATION
HEY! THAT'S MY MOTHER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
SO STOP TALKING AND JUST–
D E.

NO!
ALL MY PEOPLE
GONE?
DUST TO DUST FURBALL
NOBODY LEFT BUT YOU AND A PAIR OF FIRST
SO, INGRA, YOU WERE SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT HOW YOU WEREN'T GOING TO LET ME TALK TO YOU ?
HOW I WILL KILL YOU!

NO, INGRA!
PYREM! I--!
WE'LL STOP HIM, BUT NOT THIS WAY I KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT END
COME WITH ME WE MUST OPEN THE OBELISK
OPEN -?
NO! ALTWAAL'S ROCKY FACE MUST REMAIN UNSCARRED!
DOES ORIUM EVER STOP WHINING?
RRRUFFF HE'S RIGHT! STOP PYREM!
WHAT? WHY?
OH, NO NO GOOD TRYING TO DISTRACT ME NOW, TRENIN
ALTHOUGH PYREM'S INVOLVED
HE KNOWS EVERYTHING
IF HE THINKS THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE OBELISK
TAKE THE BAIT SEAHN LEAVE TRENIN BE

COME! WE HAVE TO GET OVER THERE!
PERSHA? WHAT DO YOU SEE?
OUR HELP IS NEEDED IN HOUSE SINISTER, REASH, OR THIS BATTLE WILL COST US TRENIN, IF NOT ELYSIA!
FOLLOW ME!
TO SINISTER? PERSHA OUR POWER IS LOST WHEN WE CROSS THE BRIDGE TO GET THERE
WE DON'T NEED THE BRIDGE TO GET THERE
AS I SAID, FOLLOW ME
THROUGH THE SHADOWS?
YES WE MUST TRUST OUR CHOICE AND FOLLOW OUR NEW LEADER

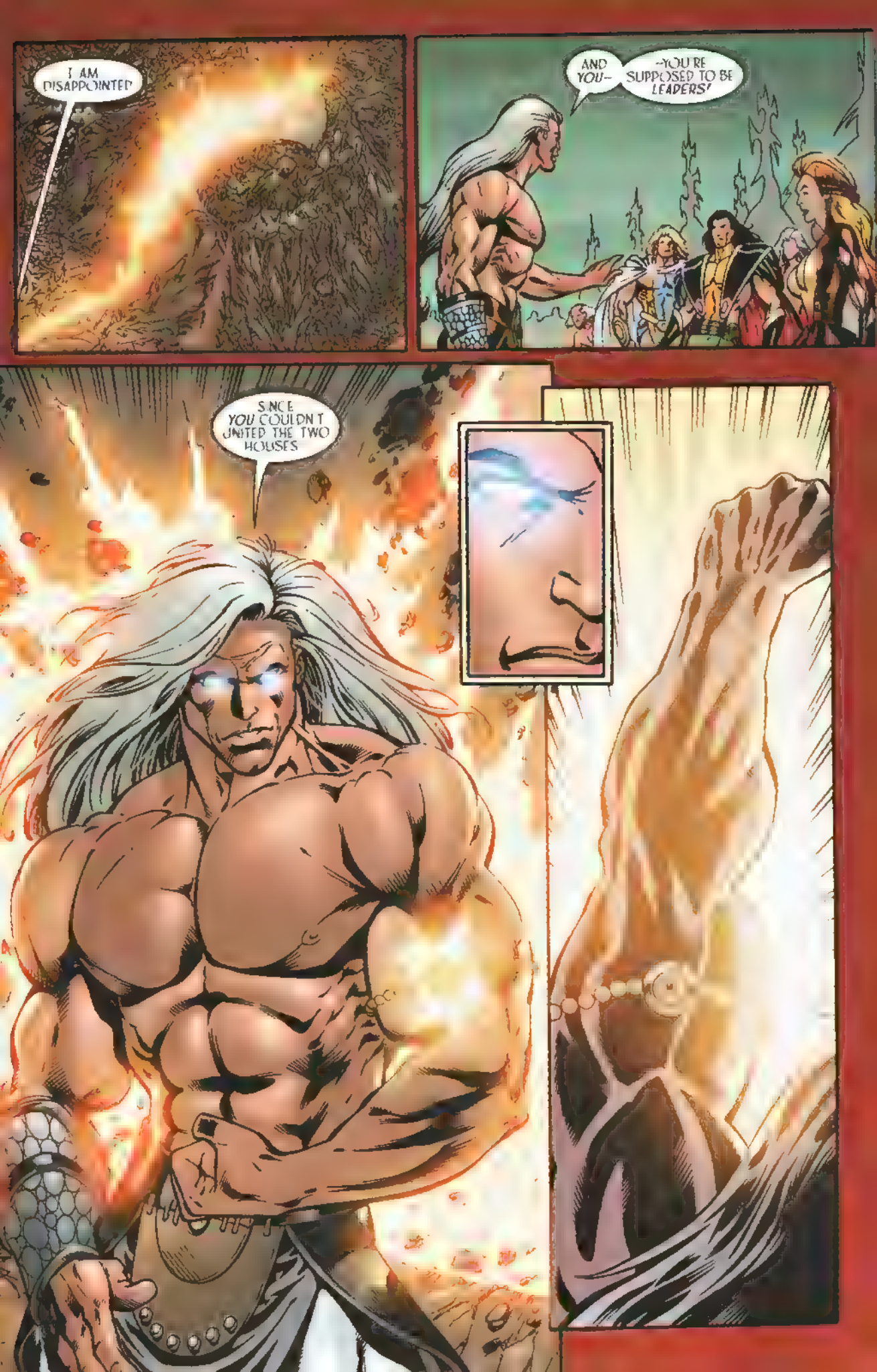
"NO MATTER WHERE THE BATTLE TAKES US!"
HOW LONG HAD YOU KNOWN?
ALWAYS
NOT ALL SECRETS CAN BE HIDDEN FROM ME
TRENN! WHATEVER THIS THING IS, IT'S MINE!
IF YOU CAN STOP THIS MADNESS, SEAHN, ALL ELYSIA IS YOURS!

HOME AGAIN
WE'RE HERE!
WITHOUT HAVING TO ATTACK EACH OTHER--
THERE WILL BE A BATTLE--
-PREPARE YOURSELVES. BECAUSE WE'RE ABOUT TO FACE THE MOST POWERFUL ADVERSARIES WE COULD ENCOUNTER HERE -

" MY MOTHER AND FATHER!"
THANK YOU, LOVE I'M NEARLY DONE
STEP ASIDE, PYREM- WHATEVER TREASURE'S HIDDEN INSIDE IT'S MINE!
NO! THE PROPHECY! DON'T TOUCH!
GET AWAY FROM HIM!
NO -NO! AIR AND EARTH AND FIRE AND WATER THE CHILDREN MUST BE KEPT APART! IF THE ELEMENTS ARE LINKED !

ALL ENDS!
ALL ENDS!
KRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAK

ALTWAAL? YOU'VE RETURNED?
NO. TOO SOON! HE IS CALLED *TOO SOON!*
I WANTED ONLY TO RELEASE THE SWORD!
PYREM, WHAT HAVE YOU ALLOWED TO HAPPEN TO MY CITY?
NO MATTER--
IT WILL BE PUT TO RIGHTS!


I AM DISAPPOINTED
AND YOU--
--YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE LEADERS!
SINCE YOU COULDN'T UNITED THE TWO HOUSES

I WILL
LET THE BRIDGE BREAK! LET THE EMPTY EIDOLON FILL!
LET ELYSIA BE AGAIN ONE!
THE FIRST WILL HAVE ONE LAST CHANCE TO PROVE OUR WORTH
HEY, ALTWAAL!
FANCY DISPLAY THAT STUNT MUST HAVE COST YOU A LOT IN THE POWER DEPARTMENT
YOU WANT TO RULE THIS PLACE? FINE
BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO THROW DOWN WITH ME TO GET THE CHANCE
I HAVE NO QUARREL WITH YOU, SEAHN
NO--!

THAT'S MY PRIVILEGE!

PERSHA--
UNH!
VENGEANCE IS *MINE*
JUDGMENT IS *MINE*.
SO IT FALLS TO ME TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF YOU.
I AM SORRY TO DEPRIVE YOU OF YOUR DAUGHTER, BUT NEITHER OF THE TWO WAS YET READY TO RULE.
SO ELYSIA WILL AGAIN BE RULED BY THE *ONE*.

LET ALL FIRST GATHER TO HEAR ME, AND NONE DENY THE TRUTH OF MY WORDS
YOU HAVE BEEN VISITED AND WRONGED BY OUR CREATOR, BOTH BY HER PASSAGE AND THE KNOWLEDGE SHE FORCED UPON YOU.
YES, WE WERE CREATED AS HER AMUSEMENTS
BUT WE ARE *MORE* THAN CAST-OFF TOYS!
WE ARE SENTINELS TO WARD OFF A THREAT OF DESTRUCTION!
NOW IS THE TIME FOR US TO EMBRACE AND FULFILL THAT DESTINY
NOW IS THE TIME FOR ***WAR***.
STAND BY ME, FIRST AND FIRST-BORN
OUR LIVES MEAN MORE THAN NOTHING, BUT WILL BE CHEAPLY SPENT IF WE SHIRK OUR FATE
COME--
ONE LAST CHANCE. ONE LAST BATTLE.
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WE WILL PROVE OURSELVES WORTHY OF GODHOOD
TO THE LAST, WE ARE *THE FIRST*

STORYTELLERS

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WRITER

Andy Smith
PENCILER

Tom Simmons
INKER

Phil Quintana
WITH Hi Hollowell
COLORISTS

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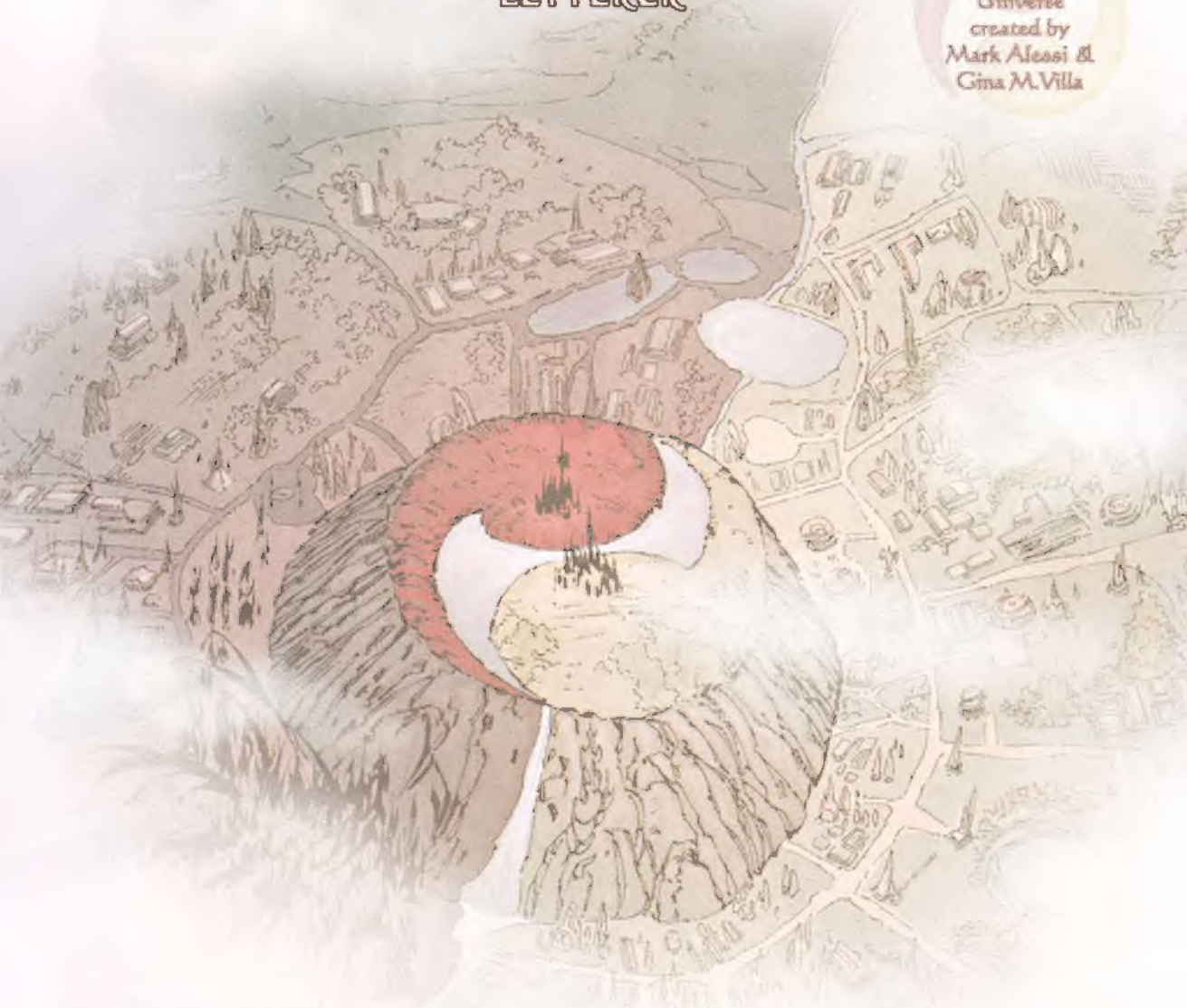

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